



TARBOE

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TARBOE

By GILBERT PARKER



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TARBOE

CHAPTER I

I MEET HIM

“**R**ASH—rash, in his last fight! He was caught in a trap.”

“That isn’t what they said of him at Fort Leavenworth.” He seemed needlessly disparaging.

“They think, but I know,” he replied decisively. Then he held out a hand for the book. He swiftly turned the pages till he came to those about General Custer’s last fight with Sitting Bull, Chief Gall and Crazy Horse, and his eyes became fascinated. For a quarter of an hour he read, and once or twice I could see his fingers twitch as though finding things that startled. When he put the book down he looked at me for a moment without speaking, then said :

“It’s thrilling but not correct. There never was a braver or more reckless man.”

“How do you know? Mrs. Custer surely had full knowledge.”

“Say, I wouldn’t swear to that. The thrill of his Seventh Cavalry band playing ‘Garryowen’ was

in her ears!" he replied with a friendly smile. From first to last his smile was taking. Yet there was about him a sense of mystery. He was frank and open in talk and yet in those first days I was always trying to "unravel" him.

This was how I came to meet Frank Tarboe. On my way to the South Seas, crossing the American Continent, I stopped at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, to stay with Chaplain Barry, who had been born under the British flag. General Nelson Miles was in command of the Fort and under him was General Ruger, and while I was there General Hancock died at Governor's Island. It was winter time, but the air was balmy and bracing. I saw the military life of the United States at its best. There were rumours of an Indian rising headed by Geronimo, the Apache Chief, with which General Miles dealt later. This caused excitement at the Fort, where were officers who had fought with General Custer, though not in his last great fight against Sitting Bull. A tablet was erected to Custer on the walls of the Fort.

I had a pleasant time at Fort Leavenworth, met all the officers and talked to many soldiers, and was vastly impressed by the discipline and the spirit of the battalions. Fort Leavenworth was on level ground, but had a natural charm of its own. None of the houses was large, but all were comfortable, and the Chapel was well decorated.

At the end of a happy month at Fort Leavenworth, I started on my journey to the South Seas. At the railway station at Leavenworth, Chaplain Barry introduced me to Fred Harvey, the owner of

the best railway dining-saloons I have ever known. We took an instant liking to each other. He asked me where I was going. I told him to Los Angeles, California, Hawaii, and so on round the world. Taking an envelope from his pocket, he wrote on it :

"This is my friend, Gilbert Parker. There's nothing good enough for him in my eating-houses, but let him have what he wants without charge—he's all wool and two yards wide."

I need not say I was grateful, and the last faces I saw as the train left the station were those of Chaplain Barry and Fred Harvey.

In those days the journey was longer from Leavenworth to Los Angeles than it is now from New York to Los Angeles. There were no dining-cars, but the weather was beautiful, and the journey was one long panorama of charm.

On the train was tall James Peck, author of "Peck's Bad Boy," subsequently to become Governor of Missouri, with his little charming wife, and among others a striking, clean-shaven, good-looking man whose years it would be impossible to say, for he had no grey hair, and yet there was a look, not of age, but of long experience in his face. He was always neatly dressed in grey cashmere or blue serge, read naught, but used to sit alone and stare out of the windows with interest. It was a figure and a face never to be forgotten. There was a touch of the foreigner in his looks and yet he did not speak with an accent, though I saw him watching me closely when I began to read Mrs. Custer's "Boots and Saddles." I talked much to Mr. and Mrs. James Peck, and we watched the scenery

with delight and the tumbling Colorado River, while to me this first experience of a summer land in winter time was fascinating. That journey will always be the most picturesque I have ever taken, except three—that from Beirut to Damascus where I saw the ruins of Baalbec, and the journey from Assouan to Wady Halfa where are the caves of Abou Simbal, and the Grand Cañon of Arizona.

When at last we climbed the vast height of Ratoon on the border of New Mexico and Arizona, I was enchanted, for the moon rose up behind the mountains as big as five ordinary moons and the air was stinging sweet—and I was young! To me all country is interesting, whatever its nature. I love the smooth, stern veldt, the limitless prairie, the salt-bush plains, the pampas, the desert, all lonely and flat and expansive, as much as the Alps, the Rockies, the Italian Lakes or vast ravines like the Grand Cañon of Arizona. When, a very few years ago, I took the same trip across the American Continent, I was not disappointed. The charm was still there.

Coming in one day from a Harvey-house lunch, I saw the young man looking at Mrs. Custer's "Boots and Saddles" in my seat. I asked him to sit down. Looking at the book in my hands he said: "Rash—rash in his last fight. He was caught in a trap."

One day he said: "I'm going to the South Seas, and in Australia I'll buy a yacht and 'do' the Pacific. I've never been outside this continent in my life, and I've a skinful of curiosity. I'm a Southerner."

He looked a Southerner, though I could not make out his high cheek bones which were Indian, and a Southerner, if of mixed blood, would have characteristics of the negro. There was no sign of negro-blood in this man, and ordinarily speaking he would be thought a fine example of pure white blood. Yet I wondered. It was a face that never wrinkled with emotion. Its only life was in the eyes and at the mouth, and they were most expressive. He had the impassive look of a Jap and he was vigilant in a curious, quiet way.

"Though I've never been outside America, I've had a lot of experience," he continued. "It's a big place, this country. A hell of a place for sights, and yet we Americans go looking overseas for what we've got a-plenty at home!"

"You haven't got ruins and old castles and a long history," I said.

He smiled. "We have ruins and not old castles—ruins of men who couldn't get out of life what was there for them. You're not an American—eh?"

"I'm British," was my reply. "This is a great country. It's full of beauty."

"So it is, so it is," he said whimsically, "but, like Custer, it's rash."

He talked little to the other passengers, yet he drew attention, and presently it was known by all that he was a rich Southern gentleman travelling to see the world. He kept to himself, however. Yet now and again he would talk to me. In little things—tiny things—it was to be seen he had not had complete social training, and yet he was well

dressed and had dignity. I can say truthfully I never met a man with greater social gifts, though it was clear he had had limited education, with no historical knowledge outside the American field. His charm lay in a keen intelligence, a rare natural philosophy, and in humour of an original kind. One day as we were standing at the counter of a Harvey dining-saloon, pointing to a ten-cent piece in my fingers, he said :

“Put your hat down, and blow that dime into it off the counter.”

“It can’t be done—I’m sure of that.”

“Let me have it.” I gave it to him.

“Now put down your hat.”

I did so, and stooping with his lips horizontal to the piece of silver, he gave a burst of breath and the dime was blown into the hat. Three times he did it.

“Try it yourself,” he added, and I tried, but could only lift it an inch or so. That was the kind of thing he could do easily, and one day James Peck said to me :

“His head is steady on his shoulders. He’s a card in his way, that fellow. They say he’s a millionaire. Lucky dog—single too, I hear, yet old enough to marry !”

One sweet morning we arrived at Los Angeles, which was fifteen thousand in population then, and the smell of the orange-groves came happily to my nostrils, and I drank in, for the first time in my life, Southern air. Flowers, flowers everywhere—fences of them. It was an unforgettable morning, and my senses answered quickly to a new experience.

Tarboe came to me, and asked me where I was going to stay. I told him. It was a cheap hotel. He shook his head.

"I'm not going there, but we'll meet again, we'll meet again." His face clouded for an instant, and then he added, smiling: "We'll see a lot of each other before we're done up final in our long boxes and laid away. Gee whiz, yes."

I stayed in Los Angeles a week, but I did not see Tarboe in all that time. One day James Peck, who was staying at the same hotel as Tarboe with his wife, met me in the street and said: "Your young 'Southern gentleman' has taken ten thousand dollars from the citizens of this town at our hotel. He's no Southern gentleman. He's an accomplished gambler. I always doubted, and now I know."

By good luck I went to San Francisco with the Pecks. They stayed at the Palace Hotel, where I could not afford to stay, and I went through Chinatown with them—a most interesting experience. One day Peck came to see me at my smaller hotel, and with a grim smile said: "Your friend, Frank Tarboe, has distinguished himself in San Francisco. He's taken nineteen thousand dollars out of the Palace Hotel. He's gone to Honolulu and you'll probably meet him there. His whole story is a fake."

"How did you find out?" I asked.

"One of my friends was nipped by him. They think he cheated, but they couldn't fasten him—he was too expert, but they said his name was Tarboe. *Now* what do you think of your friend?"

I laughed. "I think as much of him as I ever

did. He's a man of mark whatever he does. I'd like to see him again, and I shall, if he's gone to Honolulu."

"Well, my simple son," said James Peck, "he's no sort of friend for you, and you'd better steer clear of him. You've a name to make and keep. There are your friends: for their sakes, you can't keep Tarboe's company!"

"Every man's fate and fortune is in his own hands, Mr. Peck," I said. "I must take care of myself—I'm not living for others."

"We all have to live for others. I hope you'll not meet Tarboe again. If you do, keep your eye skinned."

I've never seen James Peck since, but I have a memory of an able, sane, good-hearted man with a wonderful sense of humour, and I recall happily the days I spent with him and his wife.

I left San Francisco in the steamer *Mariposa*, carrying a letter from a prominent man in San Francisco to Governor Dominis of Honolulu, who had married a sister of the native King Kalakaua.

I shall never forget passing out of the wonderful harbour of San Francisco, past the Island of Sausalito, with Oakland behind and the sun shining on the sea all golden to the eyes in the far west. A sight to be cherished to one's last hour. It was one of the sweetest memories of my first days of travel.

CHAPTER II

I MEET THE RAHLOS

AT Honolulu I went to the principal hotel where I was to remain until the next steamer, the *Mararoa*, should come on its way to New Zealand and Australia. It was my first taste of tropical life and I enjoyed it. The next day I found Governor Dominis—a man of Spanish-American blood—in the hotel. He was tall, dark, thin, reserved but amiable and said :

“You want to meet King Kalakaua? Well, he’s down at your steamer, seeing a friend of his off to New Zealand. Come along. I’ll make an informal presentation.”

I went with him and at the *Mariposa* we were told that the King was in the Captain’s cabin with his friend. As we stood at the door of the cabin we looked in and there was Kalakaua wearing a *lia-lia* of flowers, and opposite to him at the table was Tarboe, smiling. I heard the King say : “Mr. Tarboe, you’ve won four thousand dollars. You might give half of it back to a poor King,” and he laughed good-naturedly.

Tarboe, looking him in the eyes, said teasingly :

“King, go back to your Palace and get down on your knees, and thank God I haven’t got a mortgage on half your kingdom.”

Then the King stood up, and seeing Governor Dominis, said : “What is it, Dominis ?”

With a suitable apology to his brother-in-law, Dominis presented me, and the King shook me warmly by the hand and wished me a pleasant stay in his Islands. Then he turned as though to make me known to Tarboe, but I said :

“Sir, I have the honour of knowing Mr. Tarboe. We met in the United States.”

On Tarboe’s face was a quizzical smile, but he only said : “We travelled together, King. He’s no good at cards, but he’s all right—got a head on his shoulders.”

Kalakaua smiled and asked me to a native feast three days later, and presently was gone. He had dignity, though he was fat and fond of the table. He had vices such as playing cards, but he was honest, and he was a man in a real sense, and Tarboe had used him badly. The King had scarcely left the ship when the whistle blew to start, and in a few moments she would be gone, so I had no chance to talk with Tarboe, but I did say :

“You haven’t bought your yacht yet, but you’ve got the cash to buy it from Los Angeles, San Francisco and Honolulu. For a Southern gentleman you’re pretty lucky !”

He shrugged a shoulder slightly and said : “May your luck never be worse than mine. And you’ll sail in my yacht, when I get it at Sydney, if you’ll so honour me.”

I laughed. "I'm honoured to be so treated by a friend of Kings. We'll meet again, no doubt."

"Sure. I'll look forward to the day. Take care of him, Governor," he added, with an air of *empressement*, turning to Dominis, who approached us, and then the whistle sounded again. From the dock we saw her draw away, and Tarboe waved a smiling good-bye.

"I don't understand the man," said Governor Dominis to me afterwards. "He looks all right, but I doubt him. The King plays cards well, but Tarboe was too much for him, and yet Kalakaua likes him, as you could see. Do you know much about him?"

I told him I'd only met him on the train and liked him much, but that was all.

"But you said he's got cash enough from Los Angeles and San Francisco and Honolulu to buy his yacht."

"Yes, I did. He's very lucky at cards and he won much in those places."

The Governor shook his head. "Lucky—lucky!" he said. "Well, I watched him while he played, but I saw nothing suspicious. He's infernally lucky—if it's luck!"

My stay in the Islands was full of interest. At Kalakaua's breakfast I sat beside one of the princesses, his sister, and she dipped her fingers into a dish, picked out a piece of meat and held it to my lips. I ate it. It was young dog—tender, and tasted like rabbit. These young dogs are fed on a food called *poi*, made from *taro*, a plant like a potato,

and on naught else. When they are still young they are killed and they make good eating.

I liked it as I liked the whole ceremony, even to the eating of live shrimps. The King invited me to the opening of his Parliament later, where I saw him wearing the celebrated robe made of feathers from a rare bird of the island, one feather only from each bird. It was a remarkable sight, his assembly of black men playing quite successfully at Government, and Kalakaua was a presentable figure. After the ceremony, at a reception, I said to him: "Sir, I'm glad to have set foot in your kingdom."

Instantly he replied: "I'm glad it's only in it. If it was *on* it, I'd shiver!"

He had a gift for saying the pleasant thing, and I left the place with regret, for never had I had a happier time, and from visiting the islands of Hilo where is the volcano of Kilauea, oozing lava while I was there, to riding in the surf at Kaikiki every hour was full of pleasure. Nothing can be more enticing than the dancing of the *bula-bula* in these islands. It is sensuous, graceful and taking, and when the famous taro-patch fiddle accompanies it, few people can resist its charm. The Siva of Samoa is the same kind of dance and those who dance Jazz can never compete in grace with these natives who perform their dances naked save for the *lava-lava* about the loins. Then too the singing to the taro-patch fiddle is charming, and the songs are quaint and beautiful. Old Portuguese or Spanish or English airs are sung to Hawaiian words or a mixture of Hawaiian and English words—

“ *Aloha oe, olahe oe*
Eke Oneona noha ike lipo ;
 A fond embrace, a *hoē se au*
 Until we meet again.”

That is the sort of thing, sentimental, of course, and doggerel, but with some quaintness. You will go far to find such simple and *triste* melody.

I travelled much in the island, and I went to Mount Pelée, the sacred mountain which is a small volcano, and where devoted natives sacrifice themselves. It was a strange and inspiring sight when the red fire lit up the surrounding tropical growth. I visited the island of Hilo later where is the volcano of Kilauea, and all one side of the island is eaten away by the river of lava that flows down. I came to the edge of the volcano and saw the bubbling lava. It rained every morning at Hilo and the sun shone even through the rain. Then on the way back to Honolulu I passed the island of Molokai, where Father Damian had sacrificed himself. It was not all beauty, but beauty and sorrow in one.

I look back upon it all now with a great longing, for it was a time of youth and hope and fancy. It was a lovely land. Even the waters of the harbour of Honolulu were exquisite, because of the many-coloured sands and stones that lay beneath the waves. I see them still, the natives with the *lia-lia*s of flowers upon their heads, sprigs of pandanus in their ears and their brown bodies shining with the oil rubbed into them, and their white teeth shining with laughter. I see them on their catamarans in the surf, the bright sun over all,

the waves breaking and the joyous life going on in semi-torrid scenes—the silver moon among the tamarind trees and the natives singing and dancing, and I hear the music that once heard can never be forgotten.

As the steamer *Mararoa* went towards New Zealand, I thought of Tarboe and wondered when we should meet again. I had with me three letters of introduction to people in Sydney, one to an American called Charles Rahlo, one to the American Consul, Martin Griffin, uncle of Mary Anderson the actress, and one to a big squatter who had a home in Sydney.

We arrived in New Zealand, spent the day there, and I boarded my steamer again. At lunch-time I saw Tarboe sitting between two ladies at the Captain's table. It was plain that the younger, a pretty, quaint, graceful, dark-eyed girl, was greatly impressed by Tarboe. Presently I discovered from my neighbour—the Purser—at table, that the two ladies were Mrs. and Miss Rahlo, wife and daughter of Charles Rahlo of Sydney. It startled me. Here was a professional gambler on social terms with two ladies of the better class, and I was told by the Purser that they were well acquainted when they came on board.

Tarboe and the ladies had travelled together in New Zealand and were now inseparable. . . . What to do? Only one thing; to warn Tarboe. I did not see him again that day till dinner-time, and as he sat down to table, he looked at me and nodded and smiled his suggestive smile. After dinner he was with Miss Rahlo—Alice her Christian

name was—on deck for over two hours. The next morning after breakfast I met Tarboe on deck. We shook hands, then I said :

“ Tarboe, will you come to my cabin ? ”

His eyes took on a cold, hard expression, then he presently said : “ Yes, I’ll come.”

When we were inside my deck-cabin, I closed the door and offering a cigar, turned to him.

“ Give it up, Tarboe,” I said firmly.

“ Give what up ? ” he replied, though he understood.

“ Give up the girl, who doesn’t know what you are.”

“ What the hell business is it of yours ? ” There was a jar to his tone.

“ It’s the business of all decent folk not to let a professional gambler get into the society of respectable ladies.”

“ Oh, good Lord ! You don’t know the ladies. Why so excited ? ”

“ I have a letter of introduction to Mr. Charles Rahlo, the father of the girl, and I want you to sheer off.”

“ You haven’t spoken to Mrs. Rahlo yet ? ” he asked quietly, with malice in his eyes.

“ No, I speak to you as man to man first. I like you, Tarboe, but it’s an ugly game you’re playing. I suppose she thinks you’re a rich Southern gentleman.”

“ Well, and if she does ! ”

“ Then, as I said, I want you to stop now, or I’ll tell Mrs. Rahlo who you are and what you do. I suppose you didn’t gamble in New Zealand ? ”

His manner changed. He grew softer. "No, I didn't gamble in New Zealand. I lived a respectable life for a month, and I've been with Mrs. and Miss Rahlo every day. It was bully. I felt like a Sunday School teacher—I didn't know life could be so sweet. A whole month of respectability and a whole fortnight with a lady. It makes a man sit up. I've felt good. I've had my hands on the Ark of the Covenant. I suppose if I asked the girl to marry me, she would, and I'm not sure she wouldn't even if you told her all you know, and you don't know much. No, damned little! But women are fools if they get a gush for a man; they don't care what he is, for they think they'll reform him. So, may be, I might—I might say to you go ahead and do your damndest. I dunno."

"No, you care too much for the girl."

It hit him between the eyes, and the dark look left them. A kind expression came, and presently he said :

"That's a wise thought. I said you didn't know much about me. You only know what you've seen, but look at this." He whipped off his coat, bared his arm and showed scars, up to the elbow and beyond. Then he bared his ankles and they were also scarred. "Do you know what these marks are?" I shook my head. "They're scars from chains. I was in a revolution in Mexico, and they nearly killed me when I was taken prisoner. I was then with Catanza, the rebel, more fool I. For President Diaz was himself once a bandit, and knows how to deal with men who fight him. I got out of prison by the help of a native girl—daughter

of a warder. She took a fancy to me, and took some risks too. I offered her a thousand dollars later—I had buried it—but she wouldn't take it, so I left it with a man I could trust to give it to her—a beauty she was! She was as noble a piece of goods as ever was made by God Almighty. That's why I've got a soft spot for all women now. I can say this, I never got from a decent woman anything I oughtn't to have, and the rest don't matter. I've got no morals, but I can play fair. Yes, I'm going to play fair to Alice Rahlo. I'm in love with her right up to the eyes, but I ain't fit to be her husband. I'll gamble as long as I live. No, I'll do what you want. I'll leave her alone for the rest of the voyage. There!"

My relief was immense. I knew he'd keep his word. He was a man of intelligence, and had shown me the best part of him. I felt safe. I held out my hand to him. He took it and his eyes looked straight into mine.

"I don't know what to say, Tarboe, but down beneath all you're a Southern gentleman."

"No, I'm not a Southerner, and I'm not a gentleman, but I like a square deal, and I'm going to give it to you." He put on his coat again. "Some day I'll tell you all my story, but not now—not now."

We went on deck and soon afterwards I saw Miss Rahlo meet him. He took off his cap to her and passed by. There came consternation to her face, then she went to her mother. Tarboe did not appear again before lunch, and when they went to the dining-saloon, they found that he had changed his table and someone else sat in his place.

"What's happened?" I said to the Purser. "Tarboe is no longer with the ladies."

The Purser shook his head. "Heaven only knows! He's changed his seat himself. It looks as though he's off the trail. The girl is pale and the mother flustered. I wonder what it is. He don't seem to be playing fair. He's been with them a lot in New Zealand and he's rich, and it ain't decent to act as he's done."

"I'm not sure of that," said I. "I knew Tarboe in the United States. I travelled with him, and I bet he's straight enough where those ladies are concerned. He's a very taking fellow, and it's not surprising for a woman to fall in love with him."

"You've got more faith in him than I have," said the Purser.

After lunch I went to Mrs. Rahlo and showed her a letter to her husband, and I was introduced to the daughter. Mrs. Rahlo was a woman of a quiet, kind and gentle temperament; but Alice was alive with feeling, of a sensitive nervous type that would be impulsive and might be rash. It was clear she was resenting Tarboe's conduct, for it was noticeable to the other passengers who knew of their passionate acquaintance. I felt sorry for the girl, but I knew that Tarboe had done the right thing. However, she gossiped freely with me, and seemed glad of company, and so far as I could, I took Tarboe's place in the comradeship on the deck. Later that afternoon I had a few words with Tarboe.

"It's the hardest thing I ever done," he said, "but I'm glad I did it. I expect she thinks I'm a

brute. Hell, it's hard to be good in this wicked world. She's upset, ain't she ? ”

“ Of course, she's upset, Tarboe. She'll get over it and you must. It's the only thing to do.”

The rest of the journey was difficult. It was only four days, but it seemed like four years. Tarboe kept absolutely away from her, stayed in the smoking room or his cabin, and did no more than bow to her when he met her. It was clear, however, that she did not mean him to escape. She had a will of her own, and showed it in many ways. In talk with me she was alert and piquant and said things worth recording. Twice she spoke of Tarboe and said he was one of the most interesting men she had ever met. It was certain she had lost her heart to him. Her mother was greatly indignant. To her it seemed that a rich young gentleman had won her daughter's affections and then deserted her. She meant this when she said :

“ I wish her father were here. He'd put it right in his own way. Mr. Tarboe is a cad. If I were only a man ! ”

I tried to put Tarboe in a better light, but she bitterly resented him.

“ I wish he had the courage to explain. He hasn't, and my girl pays the price. Don't you think he's a cad ? ” she asked me.

“ I'm sure he admires your daughter much. What he's done was for her good, as he thinks.”

“ He should have thought sooner. He courted her for a fortnight in New Zealand, was with her all the time, and the first day on board would hardly leave her. Then all at once he stopped, and we

see no more of him. I wish her father were here. He'd bring him to his senses." She had said that twice.

"Somehow, I think you're mistaken," I replied, "but, if it's true, then she is well rid of Tarboe. Can't you see that?"

"Yes, but it don't lessen his offence."

"Suppose he had won her heart and married her, and he is what you think, wouldn't it have been worse? What he's done now saves all that. Better to suffer a little affront now than a life-long mistake. Besides, the people on the ship don't know that she's not thrown him over. You realize that?"

She nodded with a look of relief, but she was a woman, she had vanity, was hurt, and it was a horrible offence to her. Yet she did not talk to anyone else as she talked to me. Indeed, she and her daughter were surrounded by people who tried to amuse them, and there were young men of good repute and looks who paid Alice Rahlo much attention. The affair of Tarboe had only brought her into prominence, and the passengers did not know but it was she who had ended it all. So, as we neared Sydney, Mrs. Rahlo became more reconciled.

The day we entered Sydney Harbour was beautiful, and there are few, if any, harbours so fine in the world. Wooded heights on both sides and an immense bay with inlets and beautiful houses on one side and wild woodland on the other, then more houses on both sides and not a factory to be seen at the banks. It was ideal. The harbour of Quebec is fine, and so is Rio de Janeiro, but I have seen no harbour so splendid as this. The sun was shining

bright, it was the dead of summer in the country, though the month of February, and all the world seemed glad. As we neared the dock Alice Rahlo frantically waved to someone and presently I stood beside her and her mother.

Mrs. Rahlo said: "There's my husband, that handsome man with the grey moustache, waving his stick. He is handsome, isn't he?"

Yes, Rahlo was handsome, but somehow I distrusted him at once. One doesn't always know why one distrusts. It is an impression of personality. As Alice Rahlo looked at her father, her eyes beamed, and then I saw her looking round the deck. Presently she saw Tarboe and began to wave her handkerchief again at her father and Tarboe saw and smiled. . . . He seemed to be taking the measurement of Rahlo, and I wondered what he thought.

"You must meet my husband," Mrs. Rahlo said. "He'll be glad to know you."

On the dock I was introduced to Mr. Rahlo. He was friendly and said we must meet again soon, and that I must visit them at their house. Then I turned away to look after my luggage to be taken to Petty's Hotel. Leaving the dock, however, I was amazed to see Alice Rahlo take her father up to Tarboe and introduce him. She had set her mother at defiance, had trampled down her own humiliations and had made her father know Tarboe. I saw them shake hands and, distressed, I left for my hotel.

CHAPTER III

THE THREE MEET

TWO days after we landed at Sydney, Mr. Rahlo and Alice came to see Tarboe at Petty's Hotel. Tarboe did not like it, but with his usual strength of will he faced the business almost composedly. He smiled at them both and he realized that Charles Rahlo had something in his mind which did not mean well to him, though his talk and bearing were most friendly. Tarboe greeted them warmly, but there was a deliberate courtesy in his manner to Alice which touched her sensitiveness roughly. This sensitiveness was increased when Tarboe smilingly declined an invitation to dine with them. It was clear that the decision he had come to on the boat was not banished. Immediately Charles Rahlo, who had been slightly embarrassed by Tarboe's refusal, said: "Well, lunch with me at the Warrago Club and you shall meet two friends of mine, Dr. Plate and Mr. Demming, who are our fellow-countrymen, and I've talked to them about you. To-morrow at one o'clock, eh?" Tarboe nodded: "Yes, I'll meet them with pleasure."

Rahlo's face lighted and there came into his eyes a look which the student of human nature would call Machiavellian. Rahlo was very well-to-do, but Tarboe had the reputation of being a rich man, and it seemed clear Rahlo would like to open the safe where the riches were housed. It was clear Rahlo wished to leave his daughter alone with Tarboe, who did not want it. He did not wish to be alone with Alice, and, looking at the clock in the corner, he said : " I have an appointment in ten minutes, and if you are walking in my direction, I'll be glad."

This deceived Rahlo, but it only confused Alice. She felt with injured vanity and something more that Tarboe did not wish to be alone with her, so they walked out of the hotel, came through the bright scene and the freshening air to Pitt Street. Here they stopped before a block where there were many offices, representing various trades and professions, and Tarboe had escaped being alone with Alice, which he did not wish. Presently, however, as they stopped, a gentleman whom Rahlo knew, spoke to him and he stepped aside, and Tarboe was alone with Alice.

Tarboe instantly began to talk of the beauties of Sydney Harbour and the great boat-race which was to take place soon, but Alice interrupted him.

" Tell me," she said, " please tell me why you won't dine with us."

" If I told you the truth you wouldn't believe it, girl, and I don't wish to lie to you—no."

With a flame of indignation, her face flushed, her eyes flashing, she said : " Whatever your words,

it is your acts that are true or false, and they were either false in New Zealand or false on board the boat, or false now—you have your choice.”

What Tarboe longed to do was to take her hand in his and say: “You and I shall part no more, and that is the truth,” but he did not say so. He was keeping faith with me and with himself. He said: “We have not known each other very long, not yet a month, but life is all before us, and life is long.”

She flashed out at him bitinglly: “I did not know that Southern gentlemen played fast and loose—were cowards.”

Now a faint flush came to his face as he smiled at the anger that was in hers, for by what she had said he realized how fully she had given her whole life to him, and it made him glad and sad.

“I am not a coward,” he said, “and before the end of everything comes to us, beautiful girl, you will know that courage does not belong to Southern gentlemen alone, but to the citizen of the world who does the true thing in his own stupid way!”

The flush passed from her face, and her mouth dimpled with laughter for she read in his eyes the secret of his life. He cared for her. It entered into the secret places of her being. It roused in her elation, and though she did not understand and felt unsoundness somewhere, she grasped the fact that this man, though he played a part, played it with the spirit of fair play and not of villainy.

“I do not understand you,” she said, but as her father came back she held out her hand, “but I don’t distrust you.”

THE THREE MEET

He pressed her hand warmly. "I am what I am, and you are you, and it takes many kind of people to make a world."

Next day I saw Tarboe in the hotel lounge. He shook his head, smiled and said: "It was no use. Miss Rahlo made me know her father, and he's asked me to their home."

"Are you going?"

"No. I'll keep my word. I've finished with Alice. I'll play fair, but she's heavenly, and I'd like—but it's no good! I won't! No, I'm fighting shy, but I ain't so sure of her father. He's a queer cuss, with treason in his eye. I dunno what'll come of it."

"Nothing, if you keep away, Tarboe. Then it'll be all right."

With that I left him, and the next day I went into private lodgings, so I did not see him for some time save in the distance. One day, however, we met in the Domain—a park of the city—and he said:

"I kept my word about the Rahlos!"

"I know, for Mrs. Rahlo told me you hadn't been to the house."

"Is that all she told you?" he asked, with a queer look. "Is that all?"

"Is there more?"

"Much. Rahlo thinks I'm very rich and he makes me play cards. He's won a lot off me—he and Dr. Plate, and a Mr. Demming. It looks like a plot. But I'm waiting—waiting hard."

A grim look came to his face, his eyes took on an ugly expression. Suppose he should take his revenge—suppose—but presently he added:

"Will you come and dine at Sir Joseph Bank's Hotel at Botany Bay on Saturday night?—don't think I'm presuming—I ain't! I know our social differences, but I like you, and you like me in a way, and you may see things! I'll likely play cards with Rahlo and his friends. Will you come?"

This was interesting, and I'd follow it to the end. "Yes, Tarboe, I will. Have you played with Rahlo and his friends often?"

"Four times, but the gang are after me, and they've got now a thousand pounds off me. I can get it back as easy as easy. You'll see it all, if you come to Botany Bay Saturday night!"

"Have you played with anyone else in Sydney?"

"No. Her father's out for my blood—he and his friends. Say, they're a pretty tough lot—I got no use for them. I'll make 'em see what it means to try and bite me."

"It's queer her father should try it on—I don't think he's square. I made up my mind to that before I spoke to him. I distrust him more now. He's not got the character of his wife and daughter."

"He's got *no* character," was Tarboe's reply, "and the girl is an angel."

"She's as straight as her father is crooked. I don't think she knows the kind of man her father is."

"Is he pretty well off?" Tarboe asked, his eyes intent and satirical.

"So I was told by his friends in San Francisco. He's got property in the United States, and has speculations here."

"Then why should he do me out of my cash! And between ourselves, two of 'em have got signs

for the game! A dirty lot of men as ever played low on a stranger. But I've got 'em! I'll give 'em hell, and no mistake."

"I hope you'll remember what it will mean to the girl, if you rook her father."

"Rook—rook, who's going to rook! I ain't cheating. I see the way to beat them—no cards up my sleeve—only the pack we're playing with, but I'll give 'em what for. They're a lousy crowd, but pleasant, pleasant to play with—and we're all Americans, so I've got no qualms!"

"I suppose one shouldn't have qualms playing cards. It's a brutal deadly game. . . . Well, till Saturday night, Tarboe!"

He laughed, raised his hat and was soon out of sight. It was a queer situation, that the father of the girl he had saved from herself should plot with his friends to beat him at cards. I was sorry for the girl, for her mother, for Tarboe. I had a feeling that the history of Tarboe and the girl was only just beginning, and that there were startling events to come. And I was not wrong.

CHAPTER IV

A COUP

THE Saturday night came and I went to Sir Joseph Bank's Hotel at Botany Bay. All were there when I arrived, and after pleasant greetings from Rahlo I was made to know Mr. Demming. I had already met Dr. Plate at the Rahlos' house. Demming was an agreeable man with a face free from dishonesty, but it had craft and shrewdness and some skill. He was a heavy business man with good commercial ability but a crooked person morally, as I had heard.

We had an excellent dinner, and smoked and had liqueurs on the balcony, and about ten o'clock the play began. At first, Tarboe steadily lost—not large sums. He was in high spirits. He pretended to be a little intoxicated, but I saw he drank little and kept a hand on himself. The others drank a good deal. At length Rahlo, elated, said :

“ This is no good. We're playing too low. Let's make it worth while. I'll play for all I can. What's the good—in so small a way ! ”

“ Oh, all right ! ” said Tarboe, and he looked slyly across at me with a queer smile, for I was

watching the game intently. About one o'clock the game brisked up and sums were lost and won which seemed large to me. I watched Tarboe carefully and I saw no cheating, but I did see signs pass between Rahlo and Demming, and I felt strange things were pending. Tarboe had lost about eight hundred pounds, when the luck suddenly turned in his favour and he won five hundred. Then he lost again, and so it went with varying fortune till about two o'clock. Then Tarboe won steadily. I heard Tarboe say at last :

"No, don't give up. The day is young and we've only just begun."

"We've got no more cash," said Rahlo and Plate.

"What difference that! Here's paper and pencil for IOU's. So let's not stop yet."

Tarboe was in good spirits. He had won four thousand pounds, of which a good lot belonged to Rahlo. At last Rahlo moodily rose from his chair.

"I'll play no more!" he said, and he gave Tarboe a malicious look. Plate and Demming were dumbfounded, but they could not challenge Tarboe, for all had watched him carefully, as I had done, and there was no sign of sharp practice.

"I'd like you to win back what you've lost—if you can," said Tarboe with soft cynicism in his voice and it made Rahlo livid, but he said nothing.

"I'll play no more," said Plate the dentist. "I've got an important case at ten o'clock—no shaky hands! I shan't get two hours' sleep now—it's three o'clock. I'll play no more."

"Very well, then, gentlemen, but if you don't play now I don't know when you can again, for I'm

starting for Melbourne to-night, and you'll see me no more at present. He suddenly took from his pocket a roll of notes. Counting out hastily eight hundred pounds, he offered them to Rahlo. "Here's what I've won from you over what you won from me altogether. Take it as a gift and play on. If you want your revenge, better take it while it's to be had." There was a cynical rasp to his tone and soft malice in his eye.

"Revenge be damned!" said Rahlo. "You've got the banner of good luck on you—if it is good luck!—and we can't beat you. I'm off home." Suddenly he swung back on Tarboe. "Look here. I don't want to grouse, but you're the sharpest player I've ever known, and you made us think you were a mug. You've got a way with cards, damn you, and I've seen some good ones in my time!"

"I've no doubt," replied Tarboe, "but you've still a lot to learn. Say, I've played a heap of cards too, but I never saw so slippy a lot as you. I was careless at first, for I didn't know how expert you were, but when I saw you making signs, it gave me the needle, and I tried to see if I couldn't beat you at your own game. By good luck I've done it—by sheer good luck!"

"Do you mean we cheated, Tarboe!" said Rahlo fiercely.

"Certainly not. Too open to be called cheating, and badly done. You couldn't cheat, you don't know how."

This enraged them all, but Tarboe smiled and courteously opened the door for them. "Have a pleasant journey back to Sydney," he said, and

nodded to them. They did not shake hands even with me, and the soft light of early morning made uglier their rabid gloom, and soon they could be seen driving away.

I was left alone with Tarboe. He smiled cynically.

“ Pretty rotten bunch that ! ”

I nodded. “ You had a neat revenge. You’re a lot to the good. Was it *all* luck ? ”

“ It was fair enough with them. They made signs as you saw, and as I said. I got my own, that’s all. They were out to do me, and I did them.”

“ If you don’t mind I’ll go to bed for a few hours,” I said.

“ Not at all—you won’t have a bite first ? ”

“ It’s too early. I’ll sleep until ten or eleven o’clock.”

“ Right. Come. I’ll see you to your room.”

At two o’clock that day we went back to Sydney together. When we parted his words were : “ Well, we’ll meet again—perhaps in Melbourne. When you see Miss Rahlo, don’t let her know what a rogue her father is.”

That was decent of him, and I said I would remember. He was ever thoughtful in little things.

CHAPTER V

A LITTLE TALK

A FEW days later I saw Miss Rahlo at her own home. She was in fairly good spirits, but there was a wistfulness to her quiet beauty.

"I hear you've seen Mr. Tarboe," she said.

"Yes, I spent an evening with him and your father and Dr. Plate and Mr. Demming a short time ago, and they all seemed to enjoy themselves."

"I heard it from Dr. Plate. My father didn't tell me. I suppose he was ashamed to come home at four o'clock in the morning. They played cards, and Mr. Tarboe beat them badly—eh?"

"He had some luck, and he made the most of it."

"He gave them no chance of revenge. He went to Melbourne." She said it scornfully, and I took it up.

"Didn't Dr. Plate tell you that Tarboe offered them a chance to win back what they'd lost, and your father said no? He offered your father eight hundred pounds as a free gift to play with."

"No, he didn't tell me that. Dr. Plate only said he had gone to Melbourne the next day."

Then came a look of relief to her face, and she looked happier. Down beneath everything was a fondness for the man who had so persistently kept out of her life.

"Did my father lose much that night? He's been glum ever since."

"I don't know quite how much, and in any case it was divided amongst the three of them. Tarboe—they couldn't play with him! He has too good a memory. is too bold and skilful. He'd bluff the soul out of the champion of the world."

"He has great ability, but I'm not so sure about his memory. I hadn't noticed it was so good."

"It's perfect, I assure you. He forgets nothing and nobody ever. I'd back him against the world for it."

She rose. "I don't think you're right. My father liked him much, but he has changed—he'll hardly mention his name now."

"Since the other evening at Botany Bay?"

"Yes, since then he's like a dam, all held back. He scarcely speaks of him, and then it's with a nasty edge."

"Well, I'm afraid your father is not a good loser. He'd won from Tarboe before, so I hear, and Tarboe got even and a little more, I expect, that's all."

"Yes, but Dr. Plate is the same. He has a hateful mind about Mr. Tarboe, and he's very good natured."

"Disappointment! They thought Tarboe was

a greenhorn, and he proved himself a master at cards. It put their noses out of joint."

"He never was a greenhorn, never in his life," she said with eagerness. "I'm sure he never was. He had too much knowledge to be easily taken in. I'm surprised they thought him so simple. He looks simple, but he isn't."

"No, he isn't simple," I replied. "Not in the least. He has his head screwed right on his shoulders. You haven't seen much of him since you came back from New Zealand, have you?"

"He's never been inside our house, but my father has seen much of him, and we hoped to have him here."

"Haven't you met at all, then?"

"Yes, two or three times, but in the street or in the hotel, and only for a few moments and no real conversation. I don't know why he wants to see me so little. But he's a great man, and he likes me. I can tell it by the look in his eyes—I wonder if he's married!"

She said this with a sudden sharp look, as though she'd read what was in my mind! I laughed and shook my head.

"I don't think he's married—but you never can tell," I added, intent to disarm her suspicions. "Such men have many sides to their characters. If he is, it's better that he leaves you alone. Do you like him very much?"

For a moment she looked at me with a strange pensiveness, then she said: "I like him with good conscience. He's the most interesting man I've ever met—even including yourself. That's what

makes me resent his indifference after—after New Zealand.”

“Then put him out of your life, for nothing will come of it all. He’s here to-day and away to-morrow, and you’re well out of it.”

“Has he bought his yacht yet?”

“I don’t think so. He may buy it in Melbourne. You’ve plenty of friends and you won’t miss him so much as you think.”

A tear came to her eyes. “I shall always miss him, but why doesn’t my father like him any more?”

“Perhaps he’ll tell you some day. And may I ask you not to say that I’ve told you anything about that night at Sir Joseph Bank’s Hotel?”

“I’ll say nothing at all, but I’m glad of your confidence—and company, sir!”

She was by instinct a coquette, and she could turn from one man to another with skill and variety and win interest in herself without strain. She was fascinating and I let my temperament have a little waywardness, for she had gifts—distinct and vivid, and in face she was like a young Russian, sweet, sensitive and sensuous with a quick brain and a ready flow of talk.

Weeks went on, and then one day in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, I saw that Tarboe and a Dr. Smith had been arrested in Melbourne, “for conspiracy to defraud at cards.”

Soon after that I met Mr. Rahlo. “Well, have you seen the fate of your friend, Tarboe?” he asked with an ugly smile. “‘Conspiracy to defraud at cards’—that’s the charge against him, and I hope

they'll push it home. I'm certain he cheated at Botany Bay, but I couldn't catch him at it, and so I lost a lot. Sharp enough he was, and good-looking, and a gentleman in appearance, but he was an outsider, and I hope they'll salt him down."

"Well, I don't think they'll get the better of him. He's an amazing clever fellow, and he'll take a lot of beating."

Rahlo sniffed. "He's no Southerner, but a professional gambler with the skill of the devil."

"Yet, he was good company, as you and your wife and daughter know," I returned with decision. "They liked him in New Zealand and where they met him. Everybody liked him. I met him in the train on the way to Los Angeles, and I liked him."

"Yes, they liked him, and my daughter was sweet on him, but the rogue left her alone—I'll say that for him!" He nodded with decision, but he had a morose look.

"You can say it with some truth, for he liked your daughter. I'm not sure he didn't love her, and because he cared for her he gave her up. That was square of him, wasn't it? Wasn't it now?"

He nodded. "That's to his credit. He had some good streaks, and he could talk to beat the band. I've never met one who could talk better, and I've been round a lot. I'll bet he's got a history like a rainbow, and I also bet he'll get six months for this cheating at cards."

"Well, I'm not a betting man, but I'll put up

A LITTLE TALK

an even five pounds that he won't be jailed beyond his trial."

"I take you," replied Rahls sharply, "and I'll double it if you like."

"No, it's quite enough for me. I've got faith in the man."

CHAPTER VI

TICKET OF LEAVE

A MONTH later I was in Melbourne, having gone over to see the Great Exhibition and the race at Flemington, where the famous Carbine won the Cup. On the second morning I picked up the *Argus* and saw that Tarboe had been released from gaol the night before, as nothing had been proved against him, but that Dr. Smith had been sentenced to three months in prison for "conspiracy to defraud at cards."

So I had won my bet with Mr. Rahlo, and I smiled to myself. After breakfast, at about 10.30, I went to the Art Gallery at the Exhibition and began to inspect the pictures. They were lent by owners in England and elsewhere, and as I looked along the line I saw standing before a picture by Vicat Cole, called "Ripening Sunbeams," Frank Tarboe. He seemed intent on it.

I went to him and touched him on the shoulder. He turned, saw who it was, and raised his hat.

"Ticket-of-leave, Tarboe?"

He smiled ironically! "Yes, just come out to see the pictures."

"Well, it's a genial recreation after all your tough going, as they say."

"I like this picture," he waved a hand towards it. "It's like a happy summer day—but not in this country. It's Old England, where I've never been. It's a little heaven of its own."

"You've got some sensitive tastes, Tarboe. You've been sleeping in a gaol, and yet the first day you're out you come to a picture show!"

"I've never had a chance of seeing things like these. There ain't much art in the United States—not that I've seen; and so, when I got up this morning, bright and early, I said to myself: 'It's time to see things that'll do the mind good.' So I trickled off here in a cab."

"That's why people like Miss Rahlo are drawn towards you. Devils are more interesting than angels, and when a human being has something of both, there's no telling! You don't know yourself very well, Tarboe."

He laughed softly and showed his teeth. "I like to do the things Miss Rahlo approves of, and yet I like the devil in me better than the angel—if there is angel in me. You can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear. I'm rough stuff—I'm not good coal, I'm clinkers!"

I laughed. "You're modest too—that's something. See, I had a bet with Mr. Rahlo that you'd not be convicted, and you weren't. He owes me five pounds. I had faith in you!"

"It ain't good having faith in me. I'm no gentleman, and I don't run straight. If Smith hadn't been so slow-witted, he wouldn't have got

three months. I don't know that I'm sorry for him. It'll be a good lesson to him."

"Some lessons aren't easy to learn. How did you escape? What was in your favour that wasn't in Smith's?"

"Why, he talked free to his lawyer—that's foolish. If you have to lie let it be with someone that can help you. I didn't talk. I kept my mouth shut, for I knew they couldn't prove I cheated. You saw me play at Botany Bay—did you see me cheat? Did Rahlo and his friends see me cheat? No. Well, I acknowledge I didn't see any harm in playing cards for money, but cheat, oh no! If I didn't cheat, where was the conspiracy? Smith admitted to his lawyer that he did cheat and the fool of a lawyer couldn't convince the jury. He got what he deserves."

"You've saved your skin, but they'll never let you play in Australia again. Miss Rahlo may have no further interest in you."

His eyes kindled. "I don't care a rap about Australia. I'm off to Europe soon. Of course they won't let me play cards here. As for Miss Rahlo, you're wrong. She'll only be sorry for me. I bet if I went to-day and said I wanted her to marry me, she'd do it. She'd be a fool, but she'd do it. You don't know women—that's what's the matter with you. You've fed on books, but I've fed on real life and human nature. . . . Say, come and dine with me to-night, and we can talk more. People crowd in here now, and it ain't pleasant. Will you dine with a gaolbird out to see the pictures?"

I smiled. "Yes, on the old terms, with pleasure!"

"The old terms—as two men that like each other and have their eyes on similar things. You'll not be seen with me—I've got a private sitting-room!"

"Here I am in the open with you, and I feel nothing you could resent. What's your hotel?"

He told me and we parted, he to wander on among the slowly gathering crowd, I to stand and inspect "Ripening Sunbeams" and to think how strange it was that so crude a man as Tarboe should have such refined tastes. It seemed odd that his first act after leaving gaol should be to visit an art-gallery—he, a professional gambler.

I looked forward to my evening immensely. It was impossible not to be interested in him. Now, after all these years, I say, with larger understanding of the world, that I'd rather have gone to Tarboe in an hour of trouble than any man I've ever known. Bad in many ways he was, kind, clever, astute and wholly dependable—save with the cards in his hands. He was Lucifer and the Archangel Gabriel combined.

CHAPTER VII

THE STORY OF A LIFE

THAT night at eight o'clock I visited Tarboe at his hotel. He gave me an excellent meal, chosen with the taste of a gourmet and served well. He told alluring stories of travel with the art of the story-teller, never gaudy or florid, but with dramatic terseness and happy turn of phrase. I studied him as we sat together, and I became sure he had gentle blood in him and also blood of a coarser kind, like the child of a king and a charwoman.

I was sure he was not pure American, but I was equally sure he was born in the United States. He understood no language except English and French, for I tried him with German, Spanish and Italian. I knew just enough of them to provide the test. But he spoke French with natural ability, and I decided he had French blood in his veins. His eyes were black, his nose was straight, but it was almost impossible to tell his age. He might have been twenty-five or fifty! His expression was very young and he was singularly companionable. When we had finished dinner, had lighted

our cigars and were drinking our coffee, and the room was empty save for ourselves, he said to me :

“ You’ve been trying to make out who I am. On the boat coming from New Zealand I showed you scars on my arms, and I said I got them in Mexico. How did I come there ? I’ll tell you presently. But I’ll go further back—to the time of my birth. I was born in the woods, of an Indian mother. I never saw a white woman till I was twenty-one at Cheyenne City. My father was a squaw-man. He was a French gentleman fled from France for what reason I don’t know—crooked I guess—and became a squaw-man, that is, he lived the life of an Indian, among Indians, until he died. I knew nothing of him or the history of his family. He died when I was ten, and my mother when I was fifteen. I used to shoot game, and the skins were taken into Cheyenne City by the Indians and sold, and when I was twenty years old I had eleven hundred dollars honestly earned and saved, all I’d ever earned. I used to play cards—my father first taught me, and I played with the Indians. When my mother died, I was adopted by the Chief, her cousin, and lived with him. Then he died, and the new Chief and I didn’t chime, and, sick of it all, I went to Cheyenne City with my eleven hundred dollars. I’ve got a photo of myself taken there ! ”

He went over to a saratoga trunk, unlocked it and took from it an envelope, drew out a daguerrotype and handed it to me. It was Tarboe in frontier costume from head to foot.

"You were a good-looking fellow in those days, Tarboe, and how Indian in appearance!"

"I was a young fool. I told you I'd never seen a white woman till I went to Cheyenne City. Well, I never had, and I got rid of those frontier togs and bought some ready-made clothes, the first I ever wore. I met some rowdy-dowdy men at the hotel, and talked to them. I didn't speak English first-class, though we talked it at our camp, but I got on, and when I heard they had a card game on one night, I thought I'd play. So I played, and lost near a thousand dollars, having left, after I paid my hotel bill, twenty-five dollars. I thought I could play cards, but they got me soft, the swine! So I was on my stockin' feet as it were. I was broke. I had no trade. I could only shoot and play cards, and there was no shootin' that'd pay in Cheyenne City! So, that's how I played cards as a regular means of gettin' a living. But I never cheated."

He saw the look of doubt in my eyes, and said: "I'd like to show you."

"Well, show me with a pack of cards."

"I haven't a pack."

"I'll ring, and we'll get one."

"He won't give 'em to you—it's forbidden, and he knows it. I'd be turned out of the hotel." He grinned.

"I'll take my chances. I'm going to have a pack," and I rang the bell.

The waiter entered, and I asked him for a pack of cards. He shook his head in negation. I said we didn't intend to play cards, and he could

have them back in ten minutes. I slipped a half-crown into his hand.

"It'd be worth my place if you played, sir," he said.

"Have no fear. I'll keep my word to you and you'll keep your place. Please get the pack."

After another moment's hesitation he left the room, and Tarboe said: "You've got a persuasive way."

"Persuasion? Good coin of the realm! Words had little to do with it."

"Both together did the trick. Words alone ain't enough ever."

In a few moments the waiter returned with a pack of cards, and laid them on the table.

"A point of honour, sir," he said to me, and I nodded firmly.

When he had gone, Tarboe took the cards, flipped them with his hand, and shuffled them, and held them down as low as his waist, and close to his body, looking at me in the eye.

"What card do you want?" he asked, with a smile.

"The ace of clubs."

He flipped the cards again, not taking his eyes from mine, and drew out a card and held it up.

"Is that it?"

"It is, but I can't see how you do it." Then he produced five cards for which I asked.

"It's like blowing the ten-cent piece into the hat, as I did on the way to Los Angeles. It's all practice. Look me in the eyes, hold your hand close to your body. Can you see it?"

"Yes."

"Put a shilling into your hand."

I did so. "Can you see the shilling plainly?"

"I can see something white."

"Mine is the trained eye. I can see the spots on the cards. I use this natural skill in gambling. I used it in Botany Bay, in the Sandwich Islands, in San Francisco and Los Angeles, and it ain't cheating in the usual sense. If I'd done it at Cheyenne City I'd not have been beaten. Have a try."

I took the pack, and though I could see the cards and distinguish when they were figures of Kings, Queens and Jacks, I could not count the figures. But Tarboe took them and did it quickly and accurately.

"You could do it after a time, for you've good sight and quick intelligence. Conspiracy to defraud, eh? *I only pack the cards when dealing!*"

"It's a simple but difficult thing, anyhow."

He put the cards back on the table and lit another cigar. At that moment the waiter entered. I gave the cards back, and he left the room.

"Do you remember that on the way to Los Angeles, I said I knew Custer—General Custer?" Tarboe said at last.

"Perfectly. You said he was rash, and never more rash than in his last fight."

"It was true."

"Didn't you hear one man escaped from the Custer massacre in Montana?" he asked.

"There were rumours of it," I said with astonishment.

"I was that man! Custer was dead. I crawled to where was a dead Indian, got his war headdress and pantaloons, stripped myself to the waist, put myself into them, and mounted his pony. The Indians saw me riding hard, but, thinking I was of their tribe, did not fire on me, and I escaped. I rode hard from the Little Big Horn into the nearest settlement, having got rid of my Indian togs, and, naked from my waist up, I got shelter and hospitality. In the West stranger things happen than a man goin' half-dressed, so I was all right. Folks thought I'd been on a hoot somewhere, and I bought a new hand-me-down suit and got away."

"But you missed a chance of fame. If you'd told all, your fortune was made—the only man out of the Custer massacre!"

He shook his head. "I didn't want that fame. Custer was in bad odour with President Grant and the War Department at Washington, and he tried to put it right by defeating Sitting Bull—bad odour for a thing that hadn't to do with his *fighting*! He was brave, but it was a mad fight. Men call him a martyr. You call his crime a *massacre*—so it was. I liked Custer—near everybody did, but he was rash!"

"I didn't want to stay in the Army—I'd had enough of it. I've been rash myself—same as when I joined the rebels in that God-forsaken land, Mexico. You see I've earned an honest living, gambler though I am. There's been times when I'd rather have died than gamble any longer, as for instance in New Zealand, but it'll stick.

I'll always get back to it—always. If I'd made myself known, I'd have been a nine days' wonder and sensation, then I'd ha' bin forgotten—and bin still in the Army. I'm free. So, I rest peaceful. I know what I know. Besides, my own history would have come out, that I was no American at all, but a half-breed, who'd been fighting his own people. Don't you guess I had sense ? ”

“ No man can judge another man's acts. I'd not give my own brother advice, for what would be good for me might not be good for him. No man can tell what's best for another—except what's right and wrong, and you don't want advice on that, do you ? ”

“ I guess not. I've never lost sleep over it.”

He swiftly swung on me.

“ You're the only living soul knows that, and you won't give me away without I say yes ! You trusted me on the New Zealand boat, and you'll keep mum—you will, eh ? ” I nodded.

“ Bully ! Bully ! And look here—You can write. Well, some day I'll get you to write the true story of my life. You'll put things fair to the public and that's all I ask. I want to be treated like a human, not only as a criminal. I like you, and we shall meet and meet again—till—till God knows what ! Destiny throws us together, boy, and it will throw us together till the end. Be sure of that.”

“ Where next, Tarboe ? ”

He stood for a moment lost in thought, then said : “ I'm going to your country—to England by and by. I guess I'll try myself against the

biggest swells at cards over there. If you're goin' back we'll meet, sure. It ain't bigger than New York State, the whole United Kingdom, eh? London 'll be my headquarters."

"I'm going to England, but, Tarboe, if you get into trouble over cards there, they'll handle you rougher than in the United States, or even Australia. They're stern people behind all, so, keep your eye out."

Tarboe's eyes sparkled. "It don't fret me to have hard goin'. I like it—the more danger, the better fun. Do you mind I said that when I was in Mexico, I was got free by a native girl? Well, that's true, and she was one of the best that ever lived. I didn't even know her address, and I was afraid to trust anyone with her secret, for they'd have shot her, for what she did for me. But I did kiss her twice—once before she freed me, and once before I said good-bye for ever. My, she was as fine a bit of female goods as ever a man had his arm round. She did it all for love of me, and I owe her a lot—I owe her for what you see now, an upstandin' figure of a man; but I was then most a physical wreck by reason of the prison and the chains. What she could see in me, I dunno, I dunno. But womenfolks are queer. Perhaps it was pity, perhaps humanity, but anyhow she saved my life, and I'd like to know what's come to her. She was only about twenty, and with the grit of an old warrior. Eyes as black as jet, and hair twice as much as any woman's I ever saw, and cheeks with a bloom of a rose, and lips as sweet—well, never mind, you couldn't know how sweet, for I

don't suppose you ever kissed anyone but your own mother or sister in your life ! ”

“ Oh, I've kissed others, but never one that saved my life, or thought I'd one worth saving.”

“ Lovely girl, I hope all's well with her. She was a peach.”

The waiter brought us some drink and Tarboe, putting five shillings in his hand, said :

“ Your place is safe, Hunky. You're a brick from the old house where Eve was born.”

“ Hunky ” smiled, and withdrew. Then I said to Tarboe, with sympathy :

“ You've come out of all this with your chin up, Tarboe. I'm going back to Sydney.”

“ When you see Miss Rahlo tell her I skidded out of trouble all right. You needn't say I won't forget her ; she'll know that. Things will come out all right.”

I smiled and got to my feet. “ You seem to know a lot about the future, Tarboe.”

“ More than I do of the past.”

Then we parted with a warm handshake.

CHAPTER VIII

A TALK WITH ALICE RAHLO

WHEN I got back to Sydney, I saw Rahlo and got from him the five pounds he had bet about Tarboe. He paid it with bad grace, and I sent the sum to a local charity in which Miss Rahlo was interested. She was glad Tarboe had not been proved guilty, and when I told her where I had seen him first after his release she laughed softly and said : " That's the kind of man he is—full of fine sympathies. I hope we shall meet again. He's well worth knowing, whatever his faults. He played cards—well, so does my father, but not professionally—yet ! It isn't a pretty business, but it pays, though I'd rather Frank Tarboe'd got his income in another way. Hasn't he got enough money now ? He must be rich after all he's won ? "

I shook my head. " I don't think enough yet—or so he thinks ; but if he had a million he'd still play—all men who love cards do. You can't cure that, and I don't suppose he would. Your father needn't play for money ; he's well off, but if you told him he mustn't play cards again he'd be hurt.

When it's in the blood, it won't come out for the asking."

She shook her head. "I don't know. I'd like to try my hand on him. I think I'd succeed."

"Did you never think that perhaps he gave up paying you attention because he is a gambler?"

The girl's eyes opened wide. "That'd be noble of him. I shall always like him, no matter what he is."

"I feel the same about him, but I'd rather see my sister in her grave, than that she should marry Frank Tarboe. He couldn't make a refined woman happy, not in a thousand years. He might be arrested any day, as he was in Melbourne, and who'd be sorry for the wife of a convicted professional gambler!"

She shook her head firmly. "He needn't go on gambling."

"You might say one needn't go on eating. If the mind cries out for it, as the baby cries for food, it will have it. Would you urge your husband not to eat?"

"No, but if he loved me, and I asked him not to, he would do what I wanted—even as to eating."

"You wouldn't ask him, yet you would ask him to give up card-playing, and to him it's as food is to the body. He's played since he was a little boy!"

"Who told you that? How do you know?" Her eyes searched mine.

"He did. He isn't a white man or an American. He's half French, half Red Indian. He never saw a white woman till he was twenty-one!"

"When did he tell you that?" Her voice was vexed and scornful.

"In Melbourne—I dined with him there."

She smiled satirically. "You dined with him and he told you that! H'm, I'm not sure you're a safe guide for a poor girl like me. You dine with him, eat his food, drink his wine, smoke his cigars, and yet you'd cut me off from him as if he were poison."

"No, I wouldn't! I'd not cut you off from him. But a man can do what a woman can't. I'm sorry it's so. It would be abysmal folly for a girl to be made love to by such a man—his father a French gentleman, his mother an Indian squaw, and he don't even know his father's real name. You can't do the business of life that way. It would be madness. He's a professional gambler."

The girl bristled up. "He's the most interesting man I've ever met, and all you say deepens the interest. I wish he were coming back here."

"Frankly, I don't think you'll ever see him in Australia again. He's got individuality, and he'd stand any test of fidelity to those he liked. I'd pin my faith on his loyalty, though he's a rogue. But he's not a man for any good woman to marry."

She laughed softly, irritably. "Well, if I were to marry him I think I'd do him good." With a sudden burst of enthusiasm, she added: "Oh, I'm glad he wasn't convicted at Melbourne. He didn't deserve it, I'm sure."

"But he'll not always escape. They'll get him some time, and God help any family he may have! That's why he turned his back on you aboard ship,

and has avoided you ever since. He's got some chivalry, and he showed it."

"You really think it was that?" she asked with a new light in her eyes.

"He's told me so."

"It only makes me like him better." She said this with a sigh and her cheek flushed. Then she smiled.

Thinking it better to change the subject, I began to tell her of my own plans, to go on to England very soon. That did not impress her greatly. She was a girl of strong impulses, and as yet no real stability of character. She had charm and sensitiveness, but she might wreck her life by an impulsive act. She knew I understood her better than most people, and that was why she respected—and a little feared me. Properly influenced she could be a real power, but badly guided she would make a mess of things.

I look back on her as a notable personality with a glamour that would never leave her. She might lose looks and figure and form, but her eyes would always be beautiful and her expression good. She had magnetism which was almost genius, but, Heaven help her, if she did not have good luck! Sometimes in her eyes was a far-away look, as of one that dreamed, and dreamers have good fortune if they escape catastrophe. She seemed ever fluttering between the real and the unreal, between the practical and the insensible, to be the victim of temperament, but in her there was something else added and something lacking. What was added was a foreign strain—Danish; but lacking

was a stern regard for convention which is safety for many in this world. The morality of convention cannot be over-valued. It is based on consideration for others, and that is the beginning of morality. There is a religion in ritual itself, and ritual is not monarchical, it is human and everlasting.

Ritual would save Alice Rahlo, if it got the chance, when, perhaps, religion would fail and direct moral control would fail. I saw in her one who might make the world happier, but it would depend on herself being happy. If she were not happy she would be a sad example of life at loose ends. She would be scrupulously cleanly, yet sometimes be too lazy to do more than slide out of her clothes and get into bed, leaving her things loose on the floor. Yet, she had quality and if roused to do good things would do them without fear or favour. Her lips were like ripe fruit, her skin was exquisite, her hair was well-tended, and her eyes were the mirror of a soul that had not yet found its way. They told a story of nothing yet attempted and nothing done, of one that hangs over a mountain-top trying to see the valley below shrouded in mist and storm.

She was a quarter of a century before her time. She had all the independence of girls of to-day, all their disregard of conventions, all their outer heedlessness, yet because they showed their stockings to their knees, and because they seemed unconscious of the eyes of men, they claimed the right to balance all their own faculties with no loose moral sense. There was no playing with the deeper facts of being,

it was the emergence of the individual life from class-life and sex-life, the struggle to be free from man-control, this lovely, lively, dim radiance of growing consciousness. It was near, yet far, apparently blatant, yet shy—the shaded glory of self-conscious independence.

CHAPTER IX

A LONDON MEETING

TWO years passed. I was in London getting my bearings, trying to win a place in the writing world, trying to live the old life with better understanding after my long travel. From Australia I had gone to Samoa, Tonga, Fiji, New Caledonia, New Hebrides and elsewhere, seeing little of the Rahlos, for they were on a visit to the United States, but I remembered them and Tarboe and felt sure we should meet again. I had written two successful books and was on the way to bigger things, as I thought.

One day coming down Waterloo Place to Pall Mall, I saw, approaching me, Tarboe. He was looking well, was quietly yet fashionably dressed and had an air of evident well-to-do-ness. Suddenly sighting me, he smiled and raised his hat, and was about to pass me, but I stopped him.

"That's no way to treat an old friend, Tarboe," I said with a touch of reproach.

"This isn't Australia, and I didn't like to seem friends with you here. I've got some sense of things, after all."

"No sense you need have qualms about, Tarboe. Let us walk together. I'd like news about you."

He nodded and smiled, and we crossed Pall Mall, went down the Duke of York's Steps and came into the Mall, where we talked as we went.

"How have you been doing, Tarboe?" I asked. I did not need ask what he had been doing.

"Oh, good enough! I've had some luck. I didn't find the swells at cards too much for me, and I've put a little by for a rainy day."

"I can't congratulate you, Tarboe, but I'm glad you've had good luck."

He smiled. "Will you dine with me to-night on the old terms?" he asked with hesitation.

"I can't, I'm sorry to say, and besides, this is my turn and you should dine with me—shall we say to-morrow night? I'm free then. We could go to a good quiet restaurant and you'll see some interesting people."

"Say, I'm sorry! I wish I could, but I'm off in the morning. Can't get out of it easy. I'm off for a few weeks anyhow."

"Where are you going, Tarboe?"

He laughed satirically. "To Monte Carlo to break the bank there!"

"That's easier said than done. You can't read the cards at *trente et quarante* or the numbers on the roulette table as you do at cards. So it will be sheer honest luck if you win. I hope you'll do it."

"I'll have a try. I've got a system, but I don't pin my faith to it. I've been thinking it out though for a long time."

"I saw the Bank broke once there. It was the

first time I visited Monte Carlo. I had a friend who had a rich wife, and he was a gay liver. I went into the rooms one night and I saw him looking disconsolately at the number seventeen or where the number was, for it was piled with louis to the maximum. 'What's the matter, Ingolde?' I said. He shook his head. 'I've been putting money on seventeen and lost every penny in my pockets.'

" 'I haven't got much with me—a thousand francs or so, but you're welcome to it.'

" 'No. I'm off it, and someone else has taken seventeen on, as you can see, and will probably lose all as I did.'

"The croupier swung. We watched it all carefully and at last saw the ball drop into seventeen. The winner gathered up his gains. 'Leave it on,' he said curtly and the maximum was again on seventeen. All round the table were on the *qui vive*. The ball dropped into seventeen. Ingolde laughed. 'Well, this is the damnedest!' he said, with a chortle. Again the gains were gathered up by the winner, and he said: 'Leave it on.' The croupier swung. There was a moment of intense excitement and the ball at length dropped in nine. The croupier drew in the winnings. Calmly the man who had won and lost piled up seventeen again in the maximum, while Ingolde grinned and murmured, 'Idiot!' as though the man was doing a stupid thing. The croupier swung. There was no other money on the table. Every heart beat faster as the ball rolled. At last it stopped—in seventeen! When it came the winner pocketed

his gains with a good-natured nod at Ingolde, left the room, went straight to his hotel and put the money in the manager's safe.

"Ingolde linked his arm in mine. 'I don't think this has ever been done here before. Three times on one number, but what a lot of faith he had and what a lot of money to risk. I played on seventeen four times and that was enough for me. But I don't envy him. If he plays long enough the Bank will get it all back. Look at that man over there. That's an English baronet. Havelock is his name. He was rich, played here till they ruined him, but he keeps on coming, though he never plays. If he did, he'd lose the allowance his people give him. But he'll do it again some day and then he'll die and that's the end of him. But isn't it funny? He keeps comin' here where he was ruined—like a ghost of a man that's had his head chopped off coming back to see the guillotine.' There, Tarboe, that's Monte Carlo!"

Tarboe smiled astutely. "I can understand Havelock. It's what I'd do, if I ever was broke like that. Somehow the thing gets into the veins and once in, it's like malaria, you never get it out entirely. I know all about the fellow Havelock. He was a chunk of cast-off. But he had a lot of fun before he was cast-off. Oh, it is fun—hell's own fun at its best, but it's fun. It never gets out of a man's veins when it's once in full!"

Presently, with a queer look in his eyes, he said: "Did you see Miss Rahlo before you left Australia?"

She was in his veins like gambling in the veins of

Havelock, and it would never get out. He was a good fighter, but he gave up the girl for her own sake, and he could give up the cards too, but he did not wish to do so. He must do something, so he stuck to his first love. There never was a greater tragedy. Here was a man capable of great things, now a gambler by lack of moral courage, a menace to society while he could easily have been its benefactor, a criminal now though he might have become a saint.

"The last time I saw her, Tarboe, we talked of you—she likes you and she'll never forget you, but she should do so. You're not fit for her, as you know. With care, she could become a blessing to the world; with carelessness a danger."

"She'd be a danger, if she had much to do with me," said Tarboe. "But of all the women I've ever seen she's the nearest to perfection. Ain't you struck on her yourself? You ought to be."

I laughed. "I don't think she'd ever like me. I'm not her sort. How could she like you and me too—we're not alike."

"It shows you know little about women! Why, a woman can love two men totally different. She can love her husband to whom she's untrue and she can love her lover also. Don't you know that's so? Well, I do. I've seen it, it must be so, or the woman could never bear it. She'd get rid of her husband at once, or she'd fly from him. You don't suppose that the many women who have lovers hate their husbands, do you? They don't. They're not unhappy with them. They love them after a fashion. The lover may be inferior to the

husband she has a passion for ; both men satisfy certain demands of her nature ! Not good demands in the one case, but demands. Say, I know I'm right. So, Alice Rahlo could like you and me too—could if need be love us both, if you were her husband because you're good, and if I were her lover because I'm bad. See ? ”

Despite inner scepticism I did see. It all showed him capable of thinking with skill—that was his French father, I suppose.

“Tarboe, you've a convincing way of putting things, but I'll not ask Miss Rahlo to be my wife, so we'll put up a tablet to her memory.”

“Who'll inscribe the tablet ? ” Tarboe asked with a laugh.

“Let's both try,” I said. “Mine would be, ‘She would have blessed the world if she had stayed.’ ” Tarboe laughed. “Mine would be, ‘She was a flower.’ ”

“Yours is the better, Tarboe ! Neither you nor I will ever pick the flower, and I'd like to see her after she's married.”

“We both shall,” he said with conviction. “That is Destiny. The Mexicans have a saying, ‘Mio Destino,’ and that's how it is with me, I guess.”

CHAPTER X

A MARRIAGE

ANOTHER year passed and then I received the following letter from Virginia :

“I have news to startle you. I’ve just been married. My husband is a tobacco-planter in Cuba with factories here in the United States and is very rich. He isn’t handsome, but he’s able in business, and that counts a lot! I ain’t faithless to the memory of one who shall be nameless. At last I saw how impossible it was, and I put him out of my life by marrying.

“My mother and I were in Richmond, Virginia, and there we met Simeon Drew. He was mad to marry me—why I don’t know. I was, however, at last sure I cared for him. Money was naught, though I would not have married a poor man, I’m so useless, with no ability to make my way or help my husband—but no, I lie; I would have married a man I loved if he hadn’t a penny. I loved Simeon’s love for me, and I’ve been terribly lonely ever since Australia!—so lonely that I told my mother I would not go back there. She wished to return to my father, and so my marriage to Simeon Drew was a godsend to her.

"I can't tell you how pretty the wedding was and how splendid were Simeon's presents. He gave me a lovely string of pearls, and a cheque for five thousand dollars for pocket-money for our honeymoon and other things. Well, he is a good husband. He never looks at another woman, and I hope he never will, though it's too soon to expect it anyhow, for we've only been married four months, and I'm young, and my eyes and figure are good—and I mean to hold him! People say I've made a catch. There are degrees in love, and if I don't love in the highest degree, I do love, and I'd rather have married him than any other man alive. I might have married the man we both know, but it would not have succeeded—I say that now. So things are better as they are.

"My man is about thirty-six with—but, here, I send you his photo, and you can see what sort he is. Isn't it an honest face? Isn't it a good, curly brown head? Isn't his smile worth any amount of cash? Ain't he a prize for the man-show? He's dinky, that's what he is, and how safe I feel with him, and how quickly the days pass—and that's a good sign, isn't it? Heigho, but I'm lucky, and I know it, and when I see how lovely the world is, I'm glad I'm alive.

"Tell me, when did you see Frank Tarboe last, and what did he look like, and what did he say? Did he say anything at all about me? You see I'm true to old friends and don't like to be forgotten. That's vanity—isn't it? Anyhow it's feminine. We women want too much always. We aren't content unless we're objects of interest.

Well, he was—an object of interest. Isn't it true a wrong start can never be put right? It makes me sick to think of it, but I'm sure you agree with me. I suppose it's the pity of the whole thing that makes me think of him and be sorry for him. My, but he had a way with him, and if he made up his mind to do anything he'd do it. He made up his mind to turn his back on me and he did it—and he didn't want to. Even prison walls could not hold him. He was as big as big—'and I can't say no fairer than that,' as the word is among the farmers of the West.

"Well, you've had a long letter from me and I hope you'll answer it—and soon. You've written me two good letters since you left Australia; now write another and congratulate me from the bottom of your heart, if you think I deserve it, for I ain't so bad after all.

"Your affectionate friend,
"ALICE."

Was there ever a letter which was a greater piece of special pleading? And she was unconscious of it. At first she did not mention Tarboe's name, then at last she did. She was hiding the truth from herself. She had married, but she cared for the other man more. She would rather have married Frank Tarboe, the gambler, the mongrel, the out-cast, than the splendid man she had married. If Tarboe and her husband stood side by side before her, and she had to choose, she would choose Tarboe. She thought she would not, but she would. She had not character enough to resist. She was

not wilfully deceiving herself, she was only unrealizing. The fact that he had given her up when he knew he loved her kept him warm in her heart all the days of her life, no matter what came to him.

What was I to reply to her ? I congratulated her on her marriage and said she had acted wisely and would probably have a long life of happiness with her husband, whose face I liked, and who had a fortune made honestly *by his own hard work*. I said that to favour him against Tarboe. I told her Tarboe had said the inscription on her tombstone should be : " She was a flower." I knew that would touch her heart, and I could not help inserting it, though, of course, it was dangerous—what if her husband saw my letter ! But again I thought, she'd not have written to ask me to tell her about Tarboe, if she had not thought of her husband, so I was sure it was safe.

I told her much about myself, and said I hoped to see her in England or France one day—probably it would be Paris—Paradise to most American ladies. I tried to influence her by saying she was fortunate to have such a husband in these degenerate days. I hoped she would send a photo of herself—I was sure she had some taken before her wedding, though she would never be photographed in Australia. Would she let me see how happiness could gild the lily ?

When I had finished the letter I thought things over. She had given her hand to a man of wealth and merit, and I was glad, but I thought of the dreamer's look in her eyes, and I wished her complete freedom from the ties that warp and destroy.

A MARRIAGE

Imagination is a blessing and a curse, and I hoped it would be a blessing in her. She had no personal vanity as to her looks, but her vanity was that of one who wished to stand well in the world, and she had enough pride to make her strong if she gave herself a chance.

CHAPTER XI

TARBOE TELLS HIS TALE

IT directly concerns this tale that, a few months after I had seen Tarboe last, I married. Time went on. Four years later, one day as my wife and I left the Hôtel l'Athénée in Paris, I saw Tarboe walking in his old debonair way before us.

"Look—that's Tarboe!" I said to my wife, and then we hurried to him.

His face was unchanged, yet over the left forehead was a scar which was not there before. He raised his hat, and smiled, and I saw a scar on his hand.

"We meet again, Tarboe. Let me present you to my wife!"

A look half-shy, half-confused came into his face. He was about to say no, but my wife by this time was level with us, and I presented him. He bowed, but did not speak. I saw his confusion, and I said: "Tarboe, where can we meet in an hour?"

My wife intervened. "I can do our business without your help, so go with Mr. Tarboe now," she said, and I nodded. With another close, yet apparently casual look at Tarboe, she left us.

"Where shall we go, Tarboe?"

"I was going to the Bodega on the Rue de Rivoli. It's one of the few places in Paris where I feel hunky-dunky—thanks, I'd rather not go to your hotel. I've a lot to tell you, and it's better done where I am at home."

"As you wish, Tarboe."

He smiled. "You'll keep strange company. Here you are, a man of distinction, walking with a gaolbird. It might prejudice you in the sight of your friends."

"That's an old story, Tarboe, I can face it all right."

"No, it's quite new, and a very nasty business."

I did not understand, but we chatted pleasantly till we got to the Bodega. There were very few present and he took a seat away from other folk. He called for some lager beer and it was brought. As he raised the glass to drink I saw again that his hand was scarred.

"Where have you been the last few years, Tarboe?—I've lost track of you."

For a moment he looked at me without speaking, then slowly he said: "The last two years and four months, I've been in Pentonville!"

He had been in prison! "How was that?" I asked. "So, they got you at last!"

He held up his scarred hand. "Do you see that—and that?" he added, pointing to the scar on his forehead. I nodded. "Well, this is my story. Last time you saw me I was on my way to Monte Carlo to break the Bank there. I didn't do it. It came mighty near breaking me. I went back to London a poorer and a wiser man. I'd have

gone back almost bankrupt, but a funny thing happened. I was on my way to the railway station and I took out my watch. I had thirty minutes to spare. I said to myself, 'I'll go into the rooms and have one more try at *trente et quarante*,' and I did. I had lost fifty thousand francs. I went up to a table. Taking out five thousand francs I put them down. By good luck I won. I left it and my winnings on the table and again I won. Again I left it all on the table and once more I won. Then I picked it all up and left the place. In twenty minutes I had won forty-five thousand francs. As I left the room a gentleman came to me. 'That's right,' he said, 'you took great risks, and it's good you're going. If you didn't, they'd get it all back. I've lost a big fortune here and I deserved what I got. Go away and don't come back again. I'm busy losing another fortune now.'

"So I returned to London, feeling I'd had some luck after all. I meant to stick to my own game where I *was* a master, as I thought."

"You were a master all right, Tarboe—you proved that often enough."

"It all broke down at last," he continued. "I told you I had met some of the swells in the card-world in London, didn't I? Well, they got after me thick, but I held my own at least. Two of them were a dirty bad lot, far worse than old Rahlo and his friends in Sydney. I had a house in Old Quebec Street, off Oxford Street. We used to play in the dining-room. On the wall were sabres and swords, Indian, native and modern—the owner of

the house had been an officer of the Indian Army, and he had travelled and collected much. Well, these two ruffians had come to have revenge on me—their names were Saville and Cockburn—and I was ready for them. I meant to hold my own. So, we played and again I had the bad luck to win—but not so much. I say bad luck, for out of it all came Pentonville. I went into the next room and brought back a big pitcher of lager beer. I poured the beer into three tumblers. I did not like the look in the face of one of the two—Saville. He raised his glass and I mine. Suddenly without a word, but with a nasty hiss, he threw the tumbler at me. Up went my left hand and it caught me on the knuckles. Then, he made a rush for the wall where were the sabres, and Cockburn did the same. I was nearer and I got one down. I was always handy with the sword, having been in the Army and being half Injun, and I fought them both out into the hall and into the street. There we all were arrested.”

“Yes, I remember the incident. I read it in the papers. It was startling, but your name was not given. It was the name of Bill Briscoe.”

“I went by that name then. I changed mine, because I knew I was dealing with a rotten lot. It caused a sensation, and in the police-station next morning I told the truth, that I’d been set upon in my own house by these fellows, had snatched swords from the wall, and in spite of my injured hand had fought them both out into the street. The magistrate said at last: ‘As we have no record against you, I’m going to let you out on bail, for

one thousand pounds.' A friend of mine stepped forward and put down the thousand pounds—I arranged that. So, though the others were given no bail, I got out. When I got free I thought hard. Who I was would come out at the trial—that I'd been an old gambler and had won from many, and lost to only a few; and it would go hard with me. So, I sent my friend his thousand and jumped my bail. The only place without extradition was the Transvaal under Kruger. And he would never give me up, even if he could, to the British whom he hated. Besides, there was a vessel going to South Africa that very day, and I took passage and sailed away, leaving my two fellow-criminals in gaol. I had settled all accounts with my landlord, having paid rent in advance, and I had no other debts. So, I left at my bank in London a little money, and away I went. I landed at Cape Town, and went as quick as I could up country, and I did not breathe freely till I got to Johannesburg. There I lived on the fat of the land and read the English papers. I read that my absence from London had been discovered about ten days after I left, and that my bail had been paid. Also, it was thought I had gone to the Transvaal, which had no extradition. They did not despair of getting me, however. I laughed. I seemed perfectly safe, and Jo'burg was a good place for my job. I could work it without fear, for money was plenty, and speculation strong. Of course, gamblers were there, but they had crude methods, and none had my gifts. So I felt safe.

"I liked the big new country where men slaved

and struggled. Industry and merchandise were side by side with mad striving for gold, which every man loves. I knew if I stayed in England, I'd have got prison, for apart from the fight in Old Quebec Street, it would be proved that I was one of a gang of swindlers, and I could not trust those other scoundrels to tell the truth. Conspiracy to defraud—the same as Melbourne, and a lot more dangerous, for Exeter Hall England would be up in arms. As it turned out, I'd have done better to have stayed !

“A year went round in style. I made a pot of money and I had some good friends. The best friend I ever had was a Miss Molly Melsham, an actress. She was a good actress and she was a brick. She had her young sister, Sally, with her. She played throughout South Africa and was nearly a month in Jo'burg, playing every night. She and I were thick—there wasn't anything wrong morally, there never was. But she was a great-hearted girl. The night before she started I was standing before a mirror adjusting my tie, when I saw in the glass a man behind me. Then a sandbag was swung, and I went to the floor. It was a foreign detective, who had nabbed me by this dirty trick. On waking I was in a train sitting in a closed compartment with two detectives opposite.

“One of them grinned sourly. ‘Well, we've got you, Billy Briscoe, and a d——d good work it was—difficult, but safe, for we had friends among the railway people and the police. You'll stand your trial now, so grin and bear it, Billy Briscoe !’ I made no reply. It was all too ghastly. ‘Lest you should wake too soon, we gave you a dose of

chloroform, and it's kept you quiet till now.' I said nothing but this: 'I'm hungry. I had no dinner and I'm half-starved.' It was broad daylight, and I could see the open country round. 'We're still in the Transvaal and shall be for ten minutes, and if you shout, we'll soon stop it,' and a pistol was shown. I smiled. I was not such a fool as all that. So I sat quiet. Just beyond the border the train stopped and the window was open. It was warm weather. People were moving up and down. 'A little something to eat now, please,' I said to my captors, and they grinned. They were a coarse-grained lot. 'We have our breakfast booked on the train, and it don't matter about yours,' they said. At that moment Sally Melsham appeared, and presently she saw me. She gave a cry: 'Why, Bill, it's you—Bill Briscoe, and we waited dinner a half-hour for you last night.' I did not speak, but shook my head. Then through the window she saw the detectives and guessed what had happened. Without delay, she ran back. 'Oh, Molly, Molly! Bill Briscoe's on the train.' An instant later Molly was at the door of our compartment, which she tried to open. One of the detectives opened it.

"She was very pretty, with none of the faded air of an actress, and she captivated the detectives, who recognized her. She nodded. 'Why, what's the matter, Bill?' she asked with eyes all glowing. 'I'm a prisoner,' I said. Her eyes flashed. 'Have you had breakfast?' she asked. I shook my head. 'Oh, let him come and get breakfast,' she said with a smile. 'Sorry, Miss, but we can't. He don't

leave this car till he gets to Cape Town. It's all I've got to say, Miss.' She laughed. 'But you can't let a prisoner starve. It ain't decent. I'll bring him a good breakfast, and you're to pay for it,' she added nonchalantly.

She was clever and taking and she had her way ! She was gone about six minutes and she came back with a tray of as good food as I ever ate. I ate it hearty, and they let her sit and watch me eat it. 'What's he been doing that you arrest him ?' she said to the detectives. 'He'd been fighting and defrauding, and he jumped his bail in London.' 'But this isn't London. Why, there's no extradition in the Transvaal, and you'd no right to take him, now had you ?' The detective laughed. 'He wasn't easy to get, so we did what we could.' Again she laughed. 'Perhaps it was the only thing you could do, but it was illegal. It's enough to make a war between England and the Transvaal. Oh, you bad men !'

"She shook a finger at them reprovingly. I saw she would help me to escape, and once she made a finger-sign to me as though to say : 'Keep your eyes open and I will help you.' Thus it was for two days. Then on the third day I was alone in the compartment, and the window was open. One detective stood in the door of the compartment looking out of the window opposite, and beside him stood Molly Melsham. With one hand behind her back she made a hasty sign to me, and with the other she pointed across the veldt to some gazelles in the distance. She was interesting the detective. I slyly rose, got on the seat, put my legs through

the window, then my body, and hung for a moment by the ledge of the window. The train was not going very fast and there was no one looking out of the windows. I began to make paces with my feet, hanging by one hand, then I dropped. I landed on my feet, and I made for a bit of woods at the side of the track and plunged into them. I broke away through the thick scrub and for the open veldt behind. I was free, but I was running away from my captors in a country where it wasn't easy to hide. Yet, I'd have a try for it, and I ran on, on, on, over the veldt, with the train out of view.

"At last I came to a village. The Boers saw me running and smiled. They knew I was a fugitive but they made no attempt to stop me. As I passed the last house in the village I saw a red-haired woman at the door and her voice said: 'Rin, ye divil!' Then I had a sinking of heart, for I knew that Irish voice would give me away. I ran on and on till I came to a Boer house on the veldt. I went in. There was a nice motherly-looking woman in the place, and I spoke to her. She frowned. She thought I was English and she hated the English. 'I'm American,' I said, 'and the police are after me—the English police!' She understood and smiled. She knew English fairly well. 'Won't you hide me from them?' I asked, and I dipped my hand in my pocket. It was empty. The detectives had taken what I had in my pockets. But I had a belt on me under my shirt, and it had gold in it. So I turned my back to her and found a few gold pieces, and held them out to her. At first

she shook her head as though it was bribery, and then she took two pieces. 'For luck!' she said, and bit one and put them both in her pocket. 'I'd help you for noding 'gainst the English, no matter what you've done, and so hoosban' too when he comes. There's little cave where you can hide. You can be safe long you like. It's do us goot to beat the English police. They're slim, but yes!'

"Gathering some food and blankets, which I helped her carry, she took me about a sixteenth of a mile to a cave cleverly sheltered by a scrub, and parting the scrub, showed me the opening. Into it I crawled and I found myself in a roomy sort of chamber, quite dry and comfortable, and on one side was a fairly good camp bed. On that I threw the blankets, and on a shelf I placed the food and water. 'I'm all right here,' I said to the good Boer vrou looking down. 'Thank you with all my heart.' She nodded and in another moment was gone.

"For three days I lived like a dormouse, issuing at night only, yet putting my head out of the opening now and then during the day. I could not see far, for I was on the side of a little hill and the view was only partial. On the second day I was visited by the Boer farmer, who could speak little English. He was kind, chiefly I think because I was American. 'Keep in cave, and you'll moost like be all right—yes,' he said. 'They'll try track you, of coorse, but go slim does it.'

"I was not afraid. I had no pistol, and the Boer had none either. He had only a shot-gun and a rifle and I did not like to ask him for either. Besides,

if they discovered me, there would be no use fighting, for my punishment would be worse when I was tried. So I kept quiet.

"On the third day I heard approaching footsteps, and a voice, not the Boer's voice nor that of his wife. Presently the voice called down : ' Come up, Bill Briscoe.' I knew if I did not I should be fired at in the cave, so I crawled out. There were my two detectives. They had tracked me here, by the aid of the Irishwoman in the village, and they knew of the cave from a Boer neighbour who had seen me running to the house, and who thought me an Englishman.

" ' Hands up ! ' said the uglier of the two detectives, so they went up. As I stood so, he raised his pistol and struck me with all his might. It made the scar on my forehead and brought me to the ground.

"When I came to myself I was in a Cape wagon, bumping over the veldt with the house of the friendly Boer far behind. Again and again on the horrible ride the detective rammed the barrel of his pistol into my mouth with ugly oaths, and said : ' Thought you'd do us, did you ? Thought you'd get clear, you —— son of a gun ! Dirty sucker from the United States ! We've got you now, and if you squeal I'll blow your damned brains out.' When he took the gun out of my mouth I said : ' I'm beat, I've been done by two clever crooks, but I'd like my head bandaged. You hit me hard.' He seemed impressed by my coolness. ' We've got no bandages,' he said, ' it won't do you no harm. Let it bleed. You've got bad blood anyhow.'

“ ‘ Well, lend me your nose-rags, and I can make a kind of bandage. I’ll pay you for this.’

“ He grinned. ‘ You ain’t got any cash. We saw to that.’ I showed no feeling. I kept my head. ‘ You’ve been well paid anyhow,’ I said, ‘ and I’ll take it kind if you’ll let me have your nose-rag !’ This seemed to mollify the wretch and he whipped out his rag and got his comrade’s, and gave them to me. ‘ If I had a little water now, I’d be all right,’ I said. We were near a little creek at the time, and I hoped they’d stop. I was allowed to get out with a gun covering me. I drank water from the creek and then I washed my forehead clear and the blood out of my eyes, and wrapped up my head. I could see my face in the water and it looked like a caricature. When I climbed in the wagon the brute said : ‘ If you’d tried to run, we’d have riddled you.’

“ I had noticed that the driver of the wagon gave me a sympathetic look as I got in. He was a mongrel, half Hottentot, half Boer, and an under-strapper of the Police. I felt somehow that he would help me escape, if it could be done with not too much risk to himself. There seemed little chance, however, for when we came to a Boer town I was watched most closely and I always had the guns in my eye. I had a miserable meal, but enough to keep off starvation, and good water to drink, and a good-natured veldt Boer gave me a cigar. ‘ Goot smoke,’ he said, ‘ belonged to Englander gone to Hell.’ It was not a bad cigar, and so I kept my soul in patience, and once or twice saw the mongrel looking at me, as if he’d like to get

me free. But there was no chance. The 'tects were watching closely. I thought of what I'd do when I got to Cape Town. I could tell my lawyer the whole story and he could show how damnable it was to break the extradition, and that I had been stolen out of Kruger's care, but that would not influence anyone in my favour, for an English magistrate would examine me. It wouldn't help me to describe the affair of the pistol and my forehead, or stuffing the pistol into my mouth in the Cape wagon, for they'd think I got what I deserved.

"So, when the train came in for Cape Town, and I was taken to it, I had willed to take it all as it came and abide results. We arrived at Cape Town. I was taken at once to a police-cell. At my brief examination I said little. I only described how I was taken in a country where there was no extradition, and said it was a breach of international law. The magistrate smiled sourly. 'This is not my affair,' he said. 'It is a matter for the British Government and General Kruger's Government, and that must be settled in England. All I know is you are Bill Briscoe who jumped his bail, and you're going back to London to be tried for your crimes. Here you are in a British colony, a criminal, and you've been captured. Let it go at that.'

"I was taken back to England, and then they gave me three years; but for good conduct—ye gods—good conduct!—they took off nine months at the end. It was a lonely life and I kept myself from dry-rot by reading. What did I read? Well, you'll think it strange, but I'd never read a line of

the Bible before in my life, nor one of your books, so I read the Bible and your books, and they did me a lot of good. A most interesting book is the Holy Bible, with some first-class stories that take a lot of swallowing, like that about Jonah and the whale, and Daniel in the lions' den, and Joshua making the sun stand still, and the manna in the wilderness, and Lot and his daughters.

"There was one about an old man that saved a little city from destruction by the plague, and they forgot him. True to life it was, but it made one's heart a bit sick. There's a lot of reading in the Bible, but I read it steady when I was in gaol, and if it bored me in spots prodigious, I got good out of it. Made me almost feel religious. The language is A 1, and most poetical, and I loved the story of Ruth and Esther and Vashti, and the Holofernes maiden, and Miriam and Jezebel—Jessy Bell I call her after a girl I once knew—and the Ecclesiastes is full of the most beautiful poetry, same as Revelations. For sheer beauty give me the Old Testament. I learnt a lot of good phrases out of it same as 'Stay me with flagons and comfort me with apples, for I am sick of love,' and 'Son of man, stand upon thy feet and I will speak with thee,' and 'Take off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.' Oh, a lot of noble phrases and sayings that would do a man good to read and to remember. The New Testament was fine, but too sentimental for me, yet I liked it.

"So, whenever I got tired of reading the Bible, I read your books, and I will say this, that there are no real dull spots in them. They move right along,

and I dunno but what they do me more good than the Holy Scriptures—being within my understanding and not straining a point! Don't think I'm saying this to flatter. I ain't. It's God's truth, and don't you forget it. When a man's been in gaol for three years, he's learnt how to tell the truth and he does a lot of thinking, as I done. I didn't repent me of my life—not a bit. I'd do it all again just as I done it natural. But it makes one think of the future. Now, I've been free for about a month, and I came straight to Paris with my savings, and here I am, and I meet you again, and it's good for sore eyes, but it is."

"Well, it's good for my eyes, Tarboe, and I hope you're giving up gambling at last."

He shook his head. "I dunno about that," he said, "I dunno. I ain't played since I left prison, but I expect I'll do it again. It's an old habit and a strong one. Why, in prison, I used to itch to get hold of a pack of cards, and I'd have played with the warders with nothing at stake, if they'd ha' done it. But you couldn't get cards there, of course. Say, you can't guess how I felt when I stood in the dock and heard what the Judge said. He was pretty nasty with his remarks. He called me a peril to good society, a foe to humanity—all the stock phrases, and laid it on with a trowel. He said the law would teach me what it meant to jump bail. Then I interrupted him. I said the law had been broken by the Government itself, for from a country which has no extradition, it had taken me by the help of a sandbag, an illegal thing. Two wrongs didn't make a right, I said. It was a

futile interruption, and the face of the Judge hardened. He said nothing, but I bet I got extra for that. But I ain't sorry I said it. Everything and everybody was against me. Even my own lawyer was prejudiced, and though I told him to use the illegality in his speech to the jury, he didn't do it. So, I did it myself. I don't want to pose as a martyr, but I think my punishment worse than my crime—if it was a crime—a thousand-fold. It was a filthy business, worse than my being a prisoner in Mexico with the chains on my legs and arms—much worse. But those swine I fought with sabres into the street got a year each! My fighting them did that. They were the limit. The one advantage of the whole thing is I was condemned in a name not mine, so that you and other friends couldn't know it was me except you had been at the trial." He sighed. "I'd not like Miss Rahlo to know that I'd done two years and more in Pentonville—no, I wouldn't!"

"I don't think it would make much difference to her. Besides, she's married to a Mr. Simeon Drew, a tobacco millionaire. Now, what about Molly Melsham—have you seen her since she helped you in South Africa? That was a brick of a girl if ever there was one."

He gasped and turned pale. "Miss Rahlo married—Heaven above!" He stared at me, then recovering himself, said sadly: "And quite right too! . . . As for Molly Melsham, she was a wall of brick, and she came to my trial in London. Twice she came to see me in prison, but I did not see her after, for she went to Australia and I've not

heard from her since. I couldn't marry her if I wanted to, for she's married herself, but to a rotter whom she won't divorce, though she could do it fifty times over, for he's a shady lot. But the girl was worth a better man than me any time. She had a heart as big as a house, and a lot of sense and beauty and a cheerful spirit. She played a great game for me in South Africa and I never forgot it. Say, when I saw you to-day with your wife—she's a beautiful woman and no mistake—I had a feeling that I'd like to do the same thing, and if I did I'd give up gambling—I think so, I dunno. I needn't gamble any more, for I've got enough to keep me while I live. There's a little Creole widow up the Champs Elysées, that I got a fancy for. She ain't the class of Alice Rahlo—there's few that's her class! but she's some, I can tell you. I dunno, but p'raps this very day I'll find out what she'll do. She's only about thirty-three, and in prime condition and most vivacious. A pretty little Creole widow up the Champs Elysées—perhaps I may!”

I laughed at him. “Tarboe, don't act rashly,” I said. “You've got a long way to go yet. And if you marry you must banish all thoughts of another woman. Do you think you can?”

He shook his head. “I ain't goin' to drive thoughts of another woman out of my head. Why should I? She is the only woman I ever really loved.”

“But she's married to another man, Tarboe, and it isn't playing the game!”

“What's not playing the game?” he said flush-

ing. "I loved her before he came into her life, and I bet she likes me better than her own husband, if it comes to that. I ain't goin' to forget her, be sure. I don't have to; and if I was to meet her again, I'd say so. It couldn't do any harm now that she's bound to another."

"Tarboe, don't be a fool," I protested. "Of course it'd do her harm. Remember our talk in London. You said a woman could love two men, her husband and another, each in a different sort of way. And now you talk as though it would do her no harm. Of course it would. I hope you'll never meet again."

His eyes took on a queer dilated look. "Meet again—we'll meet again! and when we do, good-bye to all subterfuge. She's happily married—to a rich man. She isn't married to me. If she were it would be bad for her. But I can be her lifelong friend and no harm coming to her. I can—I can. And what's more I will, if we meet again."

"In spite of the little Creole widow up the Champs Élysées," I said, with a sarcastic laugh.

"In spite of her or of any woman alive or dead. Say, you can't know what the fortnight with her in New Zealand meant. It made a new life for me. Then you came and stopped it all!"

"I did right in stopping it all—you said so."

He smiled. "I know, and I gave her up. But I never got over it, never. And what's more I don't believe she has. I was a bad lot and she was a lady, and she was too good for me to be her husband—but it makes no difference now."

"Oh, go to your little Creole widow, and leave

the girl alone. Tarboe, you're a gaolbird ! You've done discreditable things—most discreditable. You're no fit friend for Alice or any other woman, not because you're a gambler, but because you've been in gaol. Let thought of Alice vanish."

He smiled ironically. "What's the good of preaching ! Do you think I haven't any grip of what life means ? I have—a good lot. I'm goin' to play fair in the world now, but I'm not goin' to give up the best memory of my life, not even for you. I'd do for you what I'd do for no other man, for you're a gentleman, and you treat me as one and I ain't, and you're quick to do a good turn to me, the son of an Indian squaw and a renegade French squaw-man !"

CHAPTER XII

ALICE ONCE AGAIN

“WHAT do you think of Tarboe ? ” I asked my wife at dinner-time.

Her eyes flashed. “Wonderful man—hard to beat at any game—more French than Indian and more American than either. The union of the three is powerful. Strange that a bad man can be so fascinating ! ”

I laughed. “It’s according to scripture. ‘There’s more joy in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth than over the ninety and nine that need no repentance’—unjust to the heavenly host ! What interests us is his power to be a success in his own crimes and then what might have happened if he had used his talents honestly. Tarboe got started wrong. If he hadn’t lost a thousand dollars at Cheyenne City, maybe he’d never have become a professional gambler. But there he is ! ”

Then I told her of all that had happened in Quebec Street and out in South Africa and elsewhere, and I said : “He’s paid a heavy price for all his misdeeds. But he’s not bitter. Down in his heart is the love of only one woman

and, next to her, a girl that freed him in Mexico City."

My wife shook her head in protest. "It's no good. A man like that should never marry unless he marries young. He'd be a good husband in a way, but he'd go back to cards and he'd break his wife's heart in the end. Besides, what woman would be fool enough to marry a gaolbird! Yet I don't know," she added. "He'd be hard to resist, bad as he is. You couldn't like him, if he hadn't splendid qualities. You talk with him and drink with him and count him your friend—why shouldn't a woman marry him!—if she didn't care what the world thought. Most people remain good because of that. Many don't want to be good. A great writer said every woman at heart is a rake and perhaps he was right. If she had the strong passions of a man, she would be; and public opinion keeps many women moral."

I nodded. "All I can say is, I hope he'll never meet Alice again. If he does, there'll be trouble, I'm sure of that. She's happily married, but——"

"Yes, he'd be dangerous. Destiny plays us all and, if Alice has ever loved him, Destiny will have its way."

"You are a dark spirit," I said, laughing. "What's the good of Christianity, if it can't defeat Destiny!"

"Yes, but are Alice and Tarboe so Christian that they'll pray to be freed from temptation?"

I thought that neither was a Christian in that sense and that Destiny must have its way. We talked for some time longer and then I picked up

the Paris edition of the *New York Herald*. Presently I exclaimed and handed the paper to her. It announced that Simeon Drew, the great tobacco manufacturer, had come to the Hotel Continental with his wife.

"Was ever so strange a coincidence!" said my wife. "Tarboe will see that—and then!"

"I forgot to ask Tarboe's address, but he knows we are here. He's sure to see the notice."

"Does Mr. Drew know about Tarboe in his wife's life?" she asked.

"As she has singular frankness, I should think so!"

She laughed. "And you, a novelist, think you understand women! The frankest woman is never frank in affairs of the heart. She'll hide the truth when there's no need. That she has told her husband about him, I'm sure; but nothing more. She will talk of him in an impersonal way to prepare for the meeting with Tarboe."

"I'll call on Mrs. Drew to-morrow. Will you know her?"

"Of course, but I'll not go with you on your first visit. If I were you, I'd write and tell her you mean to call. If her husband isn't there, be sure she's arranged it so that you may talk privately. You see, I know about my sex a little."

"You know it in a big way—and I'll learn about women from you!"

"And the things that you learn from the yaller and brown'll 'elp you a lot with the white,'" quoted my wife, from Kipling, laughing. "You need more knowledge of my sex, if you're to succeed

with your books. But remember : every woman is a law unto herself. You can't make all do what one does, or any two do the same thing in the same circumstances. That's where our charm—if we have any—comes in the way of life."

"If these coincidences with Tarboe were put in a book, they'd not be believed. Here we're talking of Alice and Tarboe and the fact that they're likely to meet was in the *New York Herald* under my hand."

My wife smiled. "Quite so. If you write the life of Tarboe, no one would believe it ; it's too hideously strange, too fantastic. Yet he doesn't believe there's anything odd in it. I want to see the end of it all—I do !" Then she added quickly : "Do you know if Alice has a child ?"

"No, or she'd have told me."

She shrugged a shoulder. "A child is to some women a good safeguard—yes. But I want to see your Alice."

I wrote a note to Alice and I sent it by hand at once. We were at the little Hotel Vendôme, not far from the Continental.

CHAPTER XIII

WE MEET AGAIN

THE next afternoon, at four o'clock, I called at the Continental Hotel. I was shown at once to Simeon Drew's rooms. They were large and fashionable. There was no one in the salon. Presently the bedroom door opened and Alice entered, radiant. She had changed scarcely at all, was a little more plump, was fashionably dressed, but in her eyes was still the look of the dreamer.

"Oh, you dear man to come and see me!" she cried. "My husband isn't here yet. He may be another hour. I'm sorry and so is he. Do sit down."

I sat beside her on the sofa. "You haven't changed a bit, even though you're married," I said in pleasant raillery.

"You've changed a lot, though you're married," she laughed. "But not materially—chiefly in expression."

"You are happily married, Alice?"

A wistful look came. "I've no child yet and Simeon wants one so. He has a big business, he is very rich, and it's too bad there is no child." Then

she shook off her wistfulness. "It's nice to be rich and I can have all I want; and, just because I can, I don't want it. There's woman for you."

"Had you known your husband long?"

"He's seen me since I was a baby, but I'd never known him, even by sight. He told me that when he was fifteen he fell in love with me and I was only seven! So it's real love on his side."

"And on yours, too, I'm sure," I said, with deep suspicion that it wasn't.

"It's as real as real," she answered earnestly. "I have a happy time with him. He's most thoughtful. One couldn't help but love him. He has big business deals on, but he's always thinking of little things to do for me. He knows I'm fond of flowers and chocolates and he sends or brings them to me. I'm spoiled—I'm absolutely, teetotally spoiled."

Suddenly she looked me full in the eyes. "What have you heard about Mr. Tarboe?" she asked calmly.

"I saw him yesterday."

She was startled. "Yesterday—here in Paris?"

"Yes, but I don't know where he's staying. He'll see your arrival in the paper, as I did."

A flush came to her cheek. "How did he look?" she asked softly.

"Almost as well as I ever saw him look."

"Almost! What do you mean by that?" she asked in some concern.

"Well, he's had trouble with the police and they used him hard. He's got a scar on his forehead."

I meant to warn her from him and so I spoke of the scar.

“In trouble with the police—why?”

I then told her the whole story of the Quebec Street affair and the business in South Africa and I said that he had been used pretty badly, but that he'd reaped it all by his foolishness. I told her of the two years and four months in Pentonville.

When I'd finished, she said: “I think he was used wickedly. He was a brave man. My, the fight in the house and into the street must have been splendid! I saw an account of it, but Frank Tarboe's name wasn't mentioned.”

“No, he was living under another name then and he was attacked by those brutes. He jumped his bail because he feared his whole story would come out and he'd get a heavy sentence.”

“He's had cruel hard luck, but yes,” she added defiantly, “he was a brave man and why did he get three years? It isn't a crime to gamble.”

“No, but he was with a shady lot in London and he paid for their sins as well as his own. He's bad in his acts and that's why he was punished.”

She laughed sarcastically. “He could have been a great and good man, if he'd started right. But I felt it wouldn't be right to marry him and so I took to Simeon Drew, who is a genius, too, in his way and a gentleman.”

“You won't see Tarboe, if he wishes it, will you?” I asked in anxiety.

“Yes, of course I'll see him. His bad luck shouldn't influence me against him. I'm married and I've put him out of my thoughts so far as that's concerned. But I'll see him, if he wishes it.”

"But your husband?"

"Simeon! He'll do what I wish. I've told him what Tarboe was, but not that I'd ever been fond of him; that wouldn't do. One's got to have sense. Why trouble when you don't have to?"

My wife had been exactly right. Without seeing Alice she had read the truth.

"You'll be foolish to see him. It mightn't be good for him, if he's still fond of you."

"If he's still fond of me!—of course he's still fond of me. He always has been—was when he gave me up. I see it all clearly now—all."

"But do you think it's right to keep company with a gaolbird? Do you think so? Can't you see what the world will say?"

She laughed ironically and tossed her head. "I can live without the world—we're rich enough to do that—bless the Lord! Sim cares as little as I do. There's no good talking. If Tarboe wants to see me, he shall; and my husband will ask him to dinner; he will accept and we'll be good friends."

"Good friends!" I exclaimed. "What supreme nonsense! Your husband doesn't know that Tarboe was once a lover of yours. It's cruel deception."

"And you write books! Tell me, why didn't you bring your wife with you to-day and why isn't my husband here? Why, we've both been deceiving."

"No, we haven't. My wife didn't come because she knew we would want a good talk alone."

She laughed spiritedly. "You were both deceiving, for how could she know Sim wouldn't be here? Tell me!"

“ My wife knew your husband would not be here if you wished to see me alone, and she was right.”

“ Still, it was deceit and I didn’t have my husband because I wanted to talk with you ! That’s why he isn’t here ; so we’re both alike, you see.”

“ Not quite alike, my friend. We have nothing at stake, and you have much. Suppose your husband knew you had been fond of Tarboe ? ”

“ I don’t tell him all, because he mustn’t have a thought about it.” She tapped my arm with her finger. “ Dear man, don’t make trouble when there’s no need. You imagine a lot of things and none is true. Frank Tarboe is only an old friend. So, don’t fuss your bones about it.”

“ I don’t fuss my bones at all, but there’s a little Creole widow up the Champs Elysées who might fuss.”

She was startled. “ What widow, whose widow, and what has she to do with Frank Tarboe ? ” She was instantly jealous and she was in love with him and they ought not to meet.

“ She’s a friend of Tarboe, so he told me, and he may marry her.”

“ Marry her. Of course he won’t marry her. Is she a good woman ? Is she ? ”

“ Tarboe says she is, and he’ll marry her if he doesn’t see you.”

“ He shan’t marry her,” she said insistently. Then I recognized that I’d been a fool to speak of the woman. To prevent him marrying she’d go to any length. It was the woman in her. I saw she was only half-developed, that her brain was not yet fully awake and that she was in danger. Other

women might not have been, but she had a curious temperament. She had the dreaming spirit of foreign forbears; she was conscious of something beyond the hill and she wanted to peep over—at least that. She would only be really awake when some catastrophe came to her. She had no grasp yet of essential things. Alice ought not to be given free rein as Drew gave it. She had no inherent rakishness, but she had impulse and that might lead to disaster.

“How can you prevent him marrying her?” I asked. “You’re married—why should not he? Shall one be taken and the other left?”

“I’m a woman and I’m respectable and I’m not an ex-prisoner. It makes no difference to me what he is, yet I married to make it all impossible! He should not marry a good woman—and he shall not.” Her look had determination.

“Perhaps you know what you can do and will do it,” I said. “But it’s playing with fiery tools and, if I were you, I wouldn’t see him. It’s folly.”

“You said that before, old friend, and it doesn’t influence me. You don’t know how a woman feels—yet you write books about them, so you pretend to what you haven’t got!” Satire was in her tone.

I laughed gently. “I’m learning about women anyhow, learning fast. He isn’t fit company for you. Suppose I tell your husband what he is—what would you say to that?”

“You won’t do it and, anyhow, I’ll tell him all he ought to know. He’s broad-minded and he’d understand. If you think different, tell him yourself. He has just come in—tell him.”

He entered the room. He was a man one could look at twice. He had not very distinguished bearing, yet he gave a sense of power and commercial genius. His eye was clear, his forehead had not a wrinkle and his mouth had a touch of humour. I liked him and I thought Alice a very fortunate girl. He looked me straight in the eyes; he seemed to read me and I had instant respect for him.

"We've been having a long talk over old times," said Alice brightly and he shook my hand warmly.

"Alice's old friends are welcome," he said in no affectation. He turned and smiled at her and his smile almost made him good-looking. It certainly gave him charm of manner. There was, however, in his hand a grim firmness which would make him ruthless in emergency. If he were deceived in anyone, heaven help the deceiver! Of all the features of the body, the hand is the most expressive. The eye or the face can be trained to deceive successfully. Some of the worst men and women have the pensive eye of a dove. But the hand cannot be trained to deceive. It cannot hide itself. His hand was the source of his power. When he shook mine, it was as though a vice had grasped it—a gentle vice, but capable of infinite pressure. I liked him.

"I've read some of your books," he said. "Alice made me. I only read history, travel and biography as a rule, but I had a good time with your novels. You seem to have a grasp of life—and woman."

I laughed. "Now, your wife thinks I don't understand women. We were talking about my novels, I'm sorry to say, just before you came

in. She thinks I don't see women as they really are."

Alice smiled. He nodded. "If a married man doesn't understand women, he ought to be banished to a desert isle. I bet I understand all women through Alice, and I know her down to the last button of her shoes. Isn't she there for me to read her?"

I looked at Alice, and in my look was the baffling thing, doubt. Then I said to him: "It isn't easy to understand any woman, however long you live with her. No two women are alike and no woman really knows herself."

Alice spoke then. "That's the truest thing you ever said. Put it in your next book. Don't think women won't admire you for that. They like the truth from a stranger, but they resent it from a friend—or a husband!" She sprang to her feet and, taking her husband by the shoulder, kissed him on the cheek. "Don't you ever tell me the exact truth about yourself, Sim, or I'll get a divorce on the ground of cruelty. It's a mistake. Besides, you'll never know the truth. How can you know me when I don't know myself—and I live inside myself. Don't try to know the exact truth. When you do, interest dies. It's the unknown that's fascinating, not the known. Do you hear—don't try to know the truth, then you'll not be disappointed."

Drew laughed and waved a hand towards her. "Hear the new Boanerges preach. She could make a fortune as a preacher. She's eloquent—and convincing. That's true, anyhow," he added cheerfully.

Suddenly she said : " Sim, he's seen Frank Tarboe in Paris—saw him yesterday. I want to see him, too. He's a remarkable man."

Drew nodded. " No reason why you shouldn't—where is he staying ? " he said to me.

" I don't know. He was telling me such interesting things about himself that I forgot to ask him. But he knows where I am and if he sees your names—and he is sure to do so—he'll make himself known. He's a gambler, you know."

Drew nodded. " Yes, I know. Most of us gamble, even if we don't do it professionally, and I don't quite see the difference. The biggest men in finance in the United States have made their fortunes by gambling. Fortunes have been made by cornering grain and meat and sugar and cotton and oil and tobacco !—and they don't get punished, the makers of them ; and they cheat and deceive, too—ruin others in making their own fortunes. They don't get the law after them unless they've deliberately lied in prospectuses. I don't mind a professional gambler, if he don't cheat deliberately, if he wins by skill and memory."

" I'd add sight as well as those two," I responded, remembering Tarboe's skill in reading cards.

" Yes, sight too—quick sight. But, anyhow, I'd like to meet Tarboe, and if he comes he'll be welcome. I treat my wife's friends as if they were my own."

" So I see, and that's the sign of a good husband. The great thing is to trust a woman. If she wants to deceive you, she will—no matter what you do. You can't watch all the time, and it's shameful to watch a woman at all. If I married the worst woman

in the world, I'd trust her till there came to my astonished eyes the ugly truth. I'd never try to track her down."

"That's good sense anyhow, isn't it, Alice?" he said to his wife.

"It's one of two sensible things about women he's said to-day; and I think marriage is a good thing, when it makes a man as wise as that. He's quite right. If a woman wants to deceive her husband, she can—no matter how clever he is—and a man is a fool to play the shark with her. My husband has plenty of chance to deceive me and I never watch him. I trust him and he trusts me, don't you, Sim?"

Drew laughed and put an arm round his wife. "Yes, I trust you, Alice. I know you're not going to deceive me. If you did——"

I saw his hand clench and I realized the innate mercilessness of a man who, giving his faith, is betrayed. He did not finish the sentence, but stood silent till the thought had passed from him; then he was his old cheerful self again. I watched Alice's face and I saw a look, half fear, half surprise, come into her eyes. Her husband was being revealed to her. We were all silent for an instant, then I said:

"Will you not forego formality and dine with us to-morrow at the Vendôme. You will have a warm welcome. My wife is as hospitable to my friends as Mr. Drew is to his wife's friends."

Drew looked at his wife inquiringly, and she at once nodded her head. "I'm for it. I want to meet your wife."

CHAPTER XIV

WHAT DO YOU THINK ?

AT dinner the next night I think my wife liked Alice less than Alice liked her. From instinct, she saw that the young wife had not yet found herself ; but she liked Drew immensely.

“Roughish diamond, but a diamond,” she said afterwards, with conviction. “I wouldn’t like to deceive him, though. He’d be as hard as nails. It’s a flaw in a fine character.”

I shrugged a shoulder. “It’s not a flaw. It shows he’s ‘right stuff.’ If a man trusts a woman and she betrays him, she ought to be treated hard.”

I did not quite mean this—I wanted to hear what she would say. She flashed on me with bitter irony.

“That’s like a man. If a woman betrays him, hit her ‘cruel,’ but let a man down easy ! In England a wife can’t get a divorce unless physical cruelty is added to the crime for which a wife is at once divorced. Is that fair, just and honest ? ”

I nodded. “Quite fair, just and honest. It’s

the woman that bears children ; and think of the danger to the state if a child, not the husband's own, should inherit. Men are different from women. Sexual desire does not come quickly to a woman—sometimes only when she reaches maturity does she feel anything at all. But it comes far, far earlier to a boy. He is the aggressive, the creative animal. I don't say he should be allowed more freedom, but he always has had it and, if the day comes when men and women are put on similar basis in this, it will be bad for the world. There should be more consideration for women who have to conquer their own feelings and men's also ; but woman is more responsible for the moral well-being of the world. Most of the early years of a child are spent with the mother. How essential that she should be without thought emotionally of any other man than her husband. I'd be hard, if a woman I loved betrayed me."

"Oh, your arguments won't bear analysis, but there's some sense in what you say ! I believe all good women would agree with you. But if you loved a woman—and she went wrong—you'd forgive her the first offence and you'd not act like Simeon Drew, you'd not kill physically. If ever Alice betrays him, he'll kill her and he'll kill her lover, if I know human nature."

I smiled and nodded. "You're a very astute young woman, but you've still much to learn in this bad world. Tell me, from down deep in your heart, what do you think of Alice Drew ?"

"She loves another man to-day more than she loves her husband, but she doesn't know it. She's

not awake yet. Don't you see it in her eyes? She's a dreamer and this is bad for a woman. To tell the truth, I hope she won't meet Frank Tarboe in Paris."

I shook my head. "I think she will and there'll be the devil to pay."

"Is he such a scoundrel!" she exclaimed. "Would he take what doesn't belong to him because he'd seen her first. On that basis, what would be safe in life? Is he so lost to decency?"

"No, but he gave her up because he thought he wasn't good enough to be her husband. If she makes him continue to love her, he may—I say he *may*—take what he ought not to take. She is in a strange mood. She wants to keep her power over him. It's partly the woman in her. I think she always cared for him more than for anybody. She married Drew to escape from Tarboe, and perhaps she'll love Tarboe to escape from Drew!"

"She can't be as bad as that!" was the decisive reply.

"You don't think a woman can love two men! How many women are there who love their husbands truly in one way and their lovers in another?"

She shuddered. "It's beyond me—that. I don't believe it. It isn't true to nature."

"But what about the ancients who had many wives? Was there no capacity to love ten women in one man? Why shouldn't there be the same capacity in one woman? What's the difference between sharing a man with nine other women and loving nine men?"

“ Oh, you talk like Old Nick himself. The world has moved on since then.”

I laughed. “ Oh, no, it hasn’t. The Turk has still the power to have many wives and so have all Eastern races ; and it is an ancient custom—polygamy. Monogamy is best and it is economical, but it causes a great many tragedies. I’m in favour of monogamy, for I’ve got the best wife in the world and I don’t want another, but there’s something to be said on the other side. Can’t you see ? ”

She laughed her merriest laugh and suddenly caught my head in her hands and kissed me. “ Oh, you artful dodger, to argue so and not mean a word of it ! But you’re very nice.” Her eyes sparkled, her cheeks flushed, her long, perfectly shaped fingers stroked my cheek.

“ I was thinking what many men have thought and not said. Tell me, do you think Alice is in love with her husband ? ”

She did not hesitate. “ She loves him, but not enough. Her mind, in spite of herself, dwells on Frank Tarboe—and anything may happen.”

Just then a servant entered with a telegram. It was from Frank Tarboe. It said : “ She is here.” There was nothing more than that, but it was enough. I handed it to my wife. She put it down with a sigh.

“ Poor girl ! Poor girl ! ” she said. “ If she were only awake ! But she’s half-asleep, dreaming.”

“ Won’t you talk to her ? ” I asked, with some anxiety.

“ I talk to her ?—to a stranger ! What are you thinking about ! On so intimate a matter after

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

one night's acquaintance!" She lifted up my head and looked into my eyes. "I talk to her—and be slapped in the face for my pains! Don't be a fool, dear man. Oh, if she only had a child!" she added with sorrow in her eyes.

CHAPTER XV

AN APPEAL

THREE days later I met Tarboe in the Place de l'Opéra. He was smiling and composed.

"I had your wire, Tarboe," I said. "It did not surprise me. Have you talked with Alice?"

He gave a soft chuckle. "I've seen her twice and she's more wonderful than ever. She's a lady for the high places, a bird of Paradise. I like her husband, too. He can do things. She's lucky—not luckier than she deserves. Yes, Drew is a top-notch, a steeple on the church. He treated me A1."

"He knows you are a gambler, but he doesn't know you used to make love to his wife. Is it fair to be friends after what's happened?"

"That's his look-out. They know I've been gaoled, and badly treated, and as for my old courting of Alice, does it matter?"

I shook my head. "It would matter much to Drew. If he knew you'd been her lover, do you think you'd have such freedom?"

Tarboe shook his head. "Mebbe not—mebbe not! But if she ain't goin' to tell him I ain't,

you can bet your boots. She's a dream-woman, she is—I've never met one like her."

"Not even the little Creole widow up the Champs Elysées, eh? Do you think Mrs. Drew knows about that?" I wondered if Alice had given any sign.

"If she did it wouldn't matter, for she's miles above the widow. Why, the little widow is just plain—good business, that's all—a refuge for the weary. Make a first-class wife for a man wanting to turn over a new leaf, bright and well-dressed and full of Bohemianism, but not a lady after the sort of Mrs. Drew. Not much. I could marry the widow and not feel I'd shame her. I couldn't have done that with Alice Rahlo, as you know. And I didn't when I could. I played fair, didn't I?"

"Yes, you did, and please play fair now. You're an ex-prisoner, and you've put a black mark against yourself socially. Isn't it unfair to pass the mark on to people like the Drews?"

"No. Drew is responsible for his wife's good name now and I ain't. He's got to take care of his own. I've as good manners in a way as they have, though born in an Indian wigwam, and I won't shoo myself off. It's a fair deal now, and I mean to see it through. I've got the big chance of my life."

"You mean you'll take the affections of Alice Drew when they belong to her husband?"

"I mean I'll take from Alice nothing but what I've always had. I'm not robbing Drew. What she gave me long ago, she gives me still. I'll not go agin my luck."

“Your luck! Yes, to take from a married man who treats you well the affections of his wife! If you played fair you’d never see her again. Is it right to accept his hospitality and then abuse his home?”

“Say, abusing nothing! I’m running straight. If he can’t keep his wife’s love, it’s his own fault. If he fails why should I mourn? Besides, I’ll not take from him anything he’s ever had. She loves him in a kind of way—and let it go at that.”

“But that’s the worst kind of reasoning. Is it fair to her? Suppose he finds his wife cares for you, don’t you see how cruel it would be? He’d never forgive her. He looks amiable, but there’s brutality in him, and I wouldn’t risk it—for her sake!”

He was silent for a moment, as though my argument moved him. Then he said: “If it was meant she and I should care for each other, and I think it was, why shouldn’t Fate have its way? But what you’ve said is powerful, and I’ll think it over.” He stopped and stayed silent for a moment, then added: “I wouldn’t hurt her, not by a hair’s breadth if I could help it. But am I going to hurt her? I don’t think so. I’m going to take only what I’ve had ever since New Zealand, and no more—no more at all. Where’s the harm—where’s the harm, boy? If we can’t hide it from him, we ain’t fit to live—we’re poor coots and we’ll deserve the worst.”

“Tarboe, you make me angry. Hide—why should you hide anything? There should be no hiding if one wants to play the game.”

Tarboe laughed softly. “No hiding! Why,

you hide many things from your wife, and everybody hides something or other. I've known a woman going to have a child her husband wanted, hide it from him till two months before the child came. Was that immoral? There's no wrong in hiding. It's only what comes of the hiding we have to count."

"Well, the results of the 'hiding' will be bad, if you persist, Tarboe. It's not playing fair with the woman. Suppose I told Drew—what do you think would happen?"

"Suppose you did! Well, it wouldn't be playing the game. Besides, you're not going to; so what's the good of gassing!"

"Don't be sure of that. If I thought harm would come to Alice through you, it would be my duty to tell Drew the truth. And perhaps I shall."

An ugly look came into Tarboe's face. "Then your wife will be a widow, that's all."

"Tarboe, I can look out for myself, and I have no fear of you." I laughed. "Instead of my writing your life you'd go to your little long home, and what good would that do? Besides, it would shock Alice. I won't promise that I'll not tell Drew. I believe you'll study it out and 'll take my view, as you did on the way from New Zealand. You played the game like a gentleman there."

"Did I? Well, I'll play it still, but not in the same way. If you think I'm going to give Drew grounds for divorce you're mistaken. But I'm going to kiss her once—by the great horn spoons I am, and I'm going to put my arms round her—

just once, just for memory's sake, and nothing you can say or do 'll prevent that. I've made up my mind to it—and I think she will ! ”

Remembering what Alice had said about “ the little Creole widow up the Champs Elysées,” I had no doubt. But if he kissed her and put his arms around her, would it end there ?

As we talked, we had sauntered towards the Tuilleries Gardens, and standing where the broad gardens gave an air of rustic beauty to a great city, Tarboe pointed to the Louvre. “ That's where the domestic felicity of the world was decided. Good kings and bad kings back through the ages, and all kinds of vice and immorality—but when for ambition's sake Napoleon put away the wife he loved, the woman who helped to make him, and married the Austrian, he set back the clock a thousand years. Better fifty prostitutes in a man's life and a half-dozen mistresses than that infamy ! It always was to me the greatest crime in history. I sometimes wonder who my father was. He was a gentleman, but he didn't use his own name and I don't know what it was. Yet he must have been a criminal or he wouldn't have fled from France and become a squaw-man.”

“ No, that doesn't follow,” I said. “ He might have been unfortunate or unhappy and have done the same thing. Not because one's criminal one becomes a squaw-man. I've known the best of men forsake civilization for other reasons than crime. You're unjust to your father.”

“ Then where did I get my bad streak ! Not from my mother or her family. They were the

bluest-blooded Indians in all the North and West—not from them ! ”

“ That doesn’t follow. Heredity is a strange thing. I’ve seen a family of six boys all good sober fellows except one—and he was a drunkard from his childhood because his great-grandfather was a drunkard. He looked like him, he acted like him, and he died like him. It’s no good. You can’t jump at conclusions like that.”

“ I’d like to think my father was a man of high family in France. It would account for a lot. It’d make me, being what I am, fit for good society.”

“ Because of that you should act like a man of high family—you should leave at peace the young honest wife of a man who loves her.”

“ Oh, people of high family ain’t all like that, and you know it. Look at the scandals of the aristocracy in England, and in the United States and here and elsewhere. I don’t mean to give Drew grounds for divorce, and that’s all there is about it. We’ve known each other for a good many years, and you’ve played fair with me. You’re a man in a hundred times better social position than I got. You’re going to play fair to the end and I’m going to play fair in my own way. Say, you’ve treated me bully and I’d walk across the continent to be with you, but you mustn’t ask me to dinner, for I won’t accept, and I ain’t goin’ to associate with your wife. And you know I ain’t.”

“ But you accept the Drews’ invitation to dinner, don’t you ? ”

“ No, and I ain’t goin’ to. They’ve asked me,

but I won't do it. I play fair in all that kind of thing. I know my social caste well enough."

"You've got the right fibre in you, Tarboe. You got a wrong start, that's all."

He smiled and raised his hat. "We'll meet again soon, I hope, boy. Don't worry, no harm shall come to Alice through me."

CHAPTER XVI

“ I MEAN TO MAKE HIM DO IT ”

N EARLY a week went by. During that time I saw Alice Drew once, and she was animated. “ He’s quite wonderful, our old friend Tarboe. He won’t lunch or dine, but he comes and talks, and twice he has driven me in a motor, and he has the old charm with something added.”

I shook my head. “ But do you think you should see so much of him ? Is it fair to Drew ? ”

She smiled and there was a new look in her eyes—of resolution, not so much that of the dreamer. “ It’s fair all right. It does no harm, and that’s all there is about it. Simeon is robbed of nothing. He has all I ever gave him. What Frank Tarboe has he has always had and always shall have. I’d rather talk to him than to any other man in the world, yourself not excepted. You’re too good. You oppress one except when you’re witty, then you atone. But he’s witty too, and oh, so interesting ! I’ve learned more of life from him than I’ve ever known. He makes things plain to me—I understand them.”

I might have known what her answer would be.

She was infatuated. I meant to wash my hands of it all. She had an air of elation and triumph. I had never seen her look so handsome.

"He sends us tickets for the theatre and the opera, but he won't take us himself. I'm going to make him dine with me two nights from now. He never has. My husband is going to a big commercial dinner, and he asked me to have Frank Tarboe dine, so that I shan't be lonely." A strange brooding look came into her face. "So I mean to insist on him dining with me. I'm sure he will."

"If you are lonely, why won't you dine with us? We shall have a simple dinner, to be followed by a good talk. You and my wife like each other. Won't you come?"

She shook her head, then said in a low voice: "I'd rather not. I want Frank to dine with me. I'll make him do what I want. So, let it go at that. As for your wife, I like her better than she likes me. She doesn't approve of me—oh, don't protest, I know from the way she looks at me. She's a bit of a prig, a very beautiful one, but a bit of a prig."

I laughed. "Well, if there's anything my wife is not, it's a prig. But she doesn't approve of you, and neither do I, where Frank Tarboe is concerned. You are naughty and self-willed. You know you are."

"Bosh! I'm neither, but I like to have my own way and I mean to have it."

"You'll make it impossible for Frank Tarboe to marry 'the little Creole widow up the Champs Elysées.' Is that what you mean?"

"He shan't marry her, not ever!" There was

“I MEAN TO MAKE HIM DO IT”

a look in her face I did not like. She had willed to make Tarboe her slave.

“Your husband is a fool,” I remarked. “I wish you wouldn’t ask Tarboe to dine with you alone.”

She tossed her head, then said: “Well, won’t your wife and yourself come? I’d be glad to have you—very glad.”

I shook my head in negation. “My wife doesn’t meet Tarboe socially. We’ve always taken that view, Tarboe and I.”

“That’s why he won’t lunch or dine with us. You dine with him, your wife meets him, we all meet him, and it’s silly not to dine with us. I mean to make him do it.”

Her face was slightly flushed, her eyes were lighted, she had excitement I did not like. I felt an air of tragedy. I said nothing for a moment, then:

“If you’d only be ruled by common sense, not vanity, you’d be a happier woman, Alice,” I said. “You’re throwing yourself into the shambles.”

“I’m acting like a sane, sensible kindly woman.” She held out a hand. “Good-bye, and don’t recall the worst about me. I’m not so bad. I’m only a weeny bit selfish.”

I laughed. “Well, I hope Tarboe won’t come to your dinner.”

“He will—he surely will,” she retorted and we parted.

CHAPTER XVII

ALMOST THE END OF IT ALL

THE day of Alice's dinner came and passed and I waked next morning oppressed by some imaginary trouble. I picked up the *Matin* at breakfast. Almost the first thing I saw was the leaded announcement that the night before, at eleven o'clock, Simeon Drew, the American tobacco king, had died suddenly at the Continental Hotel. Shocked, I showed the paper to my wife.

No details were given except that Mrs. Drew had been dining with a friend of her husband and herself, and that on Mr. Drew's return he had suddenly collapsed and had died of apoplexy in five minutes. He had not spoken after his fall to the floor. Medical examination had said he was naturally a healthy man, but sudden shock might bring on apoplexy. It could not be supposed he had suffered any shock, and his wife said he was normal when he went to the banquet, leaving her dining with his and her friend, Mr. Frank Tarboe, whom they had known many years. Mr. Tarboe said that Mr. Drew collapsed on entering the room and spoke no word thereafter. An inquest would

be held, but it was not thought new facts would emerge. His wife was expected to be sole legatee of his fortune. She bore herself calmly. She had no tears, but remained immobile and extremely pale. No doubt the body would be taken to America for burial.

I turned to my wife. "It's an ugly story; I wonder why he collapsed. He wasn't the sort to cave in like that."

She nodded. "It is a horrible ending—to his immense love."

Before I left for the Continental I said: "I had presentiments about the dinner, and this is the end of it! I tried to persuade her, but she would not listen and finally asked us both to come. I told her I would not allow you to meet Tarboe at a dinner. She would listen to nothing—and now this!"

"It was nice her asking us," my wife said. "It shows naught was wrong in her mind about the dinner. It proves her innocent!" She looked at me inquiringly. I shook my head. I did not know quite what to think.

I arrived at the Continental and found that the body was in a room adjoining the big apartment Drew had taken, and was being embalmed. Death from natural causes was the verdict at the inquest. I did not see the body then. I entered Mrs. Drew's apartments and was told she would see me. At last the door of the bedroom opened and Alice entered. She was dressed in black and her face was the most agonized I have ever seen! There was no dreaming in the eyes, but stark and terrible

reality. She had found life and herself, and her dreaming was over for ever. Her eyes were like wells of darkness, her mouth was set and rigid, she moved with painful slowness.

I caught her right hand in both of mine and pressed it. For an instant her eyes seemed to submerge, then they became dry again, and she said slowly : " You see it's all over—for ever and ever."

I inclined my head. " You know how I felt, how set I was against the dinner."

She said quite deliberately : " It ended in shame and tragedy."

" Shame ! " I said aghast.

" The truth will never be told, but he caught me in Tarboe's arms, with my lips to his, and so he fell—his heart was wrong. He died of shock."

" Good God ! That was the end, was it ? He had loved you with all his heart."

" Yes, he loved me, but see, I will not take his money. I will not spend his fortune. I would rather starve."

" That's nonsense," I said. " He only saw Tarboe kiss you."

She looked at me steadily. " He knew all there was to know. I will not be his legatee. I will not."

" But you will. Do you wish the finger of suspicion pointed at you for the rest of your life ? That will happen if you do not become his legatee. Can't you see ? "

" I don't care. I'll bear shame for the wrong I did him."

" Is it fair to your father and mother and all

your old friends? Will you tell them you were caught by your husband in Tarboe's arms? Is it playing fair? You ought to keep Drew's name free from shame. Think hard, my dear—think hard."

She made a helpless gesture. "Oh, my God, how blind I've been these many years!" She looked me in the eyes. "In my *heart* I was really guilty, and Sim knew the truth!"

Then with a sudden will she added: "I've finished with Tarboe for ever."

"But you insisted. He did not want to dine with you, and you made him, didn't you?"

"I'd have done anything to prevent him marrying that woman."

"Let the dead past bury its dead. Tell me, will you inherit your husband's fortune? Will you?"

For a moment she sat moveless, her eyes brooding. "There's naught else to do, perhaps," she said at last, with dejection.

"If he knows the *truth* about you now, he'd will you his fortune again. His own bad constitution killed him."

"No, I murdered him," she said in agitation. "But for me he wouldn't have died."

"Play a common-sense part now, my friend."

Her face was full of concentrating purpose and sorrow. At last she nodded and sighed heavily. "I'll not refuse, if he has left it to me. But oh, the shame!"

"That's right. My wife will come to help you as I can't. But I'll make all other arrangements, if I may."

She nodded. "See his lawyer and his agent. They are both in the hotel."

I nodded and turned to go. She touched my arm.

"Dear old friend," she said, "I'd like to go after Sim and tell him all!"

I pressed her hand. "Perhaps he knows all."

CHAPTER XVIII

TO MEET NO MORE

THE morning when the body of Simeon Drew left Havre in a French ship called the *Touraine* was clear of any cloud in the sky, the sun making Havre and the sea and all the wide horizon and the world beautiful. With Drew's secretary and agent I said good-bye to Alice on the deck. The casket had been placed in a large state-room, carefully wedged to prevent movement in a high sea, and a sailor was to watch it night and day.

Alice's face was still terribly pale and her big eyes shone with a new look—that of understanding of life, which she had never known before. The captain, first officer, purser, and doctor were all presented, and she bore herself with dignity and almost rigid composure. She was of her surroundings and yet not of them. She was living in a world apart, in a fantastic dream. Fortunately Drew's secretary and agent were going on the ship, and they were the link with the practical life of to-day. I felt that if I closed my eyes for an instant and opened them again she would not be there, so withdrawn was she from the life in which we moved.

Though her tragedy had at first given anguish to her face, all anguish had now gone, and there remained the immobile look of one who had seen the worst that life can do, had passed through the terrible portals of tragedy and disgrace, the horror of life's most excruciating moments, which had robbed the spirit of outer expression, and had left it dazed and dumb. So she seemed to me. All the years she had lived were as nothing to the revelation of these last days. In them centuries of experience had been crowded.

The ship was ready to go. I bade her good-bye, holding her slim hand, which lay lifeless in mine, and she said to me, with truthful premonition in her eyes: "Life bites deep, my friend. We shall meet in peace at last—some time!" Then a strange fine fleeting smile touched the corner of her lips, and I said in reply: "Yes, in peace at last." She turned her head away and walked quietly towards her state-room.

I watched the ship move slowly from the dock and face the open sea, and I sighed because it was as though the wide sea was taking from me a lifeless body, and another body which had life, but from which the soul or spirit had gone. Presently a voice said behind me: "I shan't ever see her again."

I turned. It was Frank Tarboe. He was erect, grim-faced, sad-eyed, but, unlike the woman, wholly a part of this active, strident, noisy world.

I shook my head at him. "You and she had your own way of doing things. That man died through you. You both will pay the price."

For an instant he did not reply, then he said:

"I want to talk to you. In half an hour the train starts for Paris. My bag is on the train—shall we?"

"Yes," I said, "we will return to Paris together."

We got into a cab and reached the train, without having spoken a word. We entered the train, selected a compartment which we would have to ourselves, rang for the waiter and ordered lunch.

Presently I said: "Please tell me of that last scene at the hotel and of yourself since."

He looked at me for a moment without speaking, then he said: "It is not the penalties of life we have to face, but the accidents. How many times have I done worse things than I did that night, and escaped without exposure of any kind? Strange that the only time I kissed her or held her in my arms should be the moment when the door opened, her husband entered and closed it behind him. Perhaps it all was meant to be, but why should his life go for no wrong he had done?" A frown gathered on his forehead, he made one or two quick motions of the lips, showing sharp strain, and then I said:

"Why these things happen only the eternal judgment book can tell. He would have killed you, Tarboe, it was in him—the ruthless merciless hand of that man would have seized a knife and struck you dead. I saw it in him from the first—the quiet, powerful-minded, honest citizen, who knew no compromise and would admit no concession."

Tarboe nodded: "I know, and I would not have fought him. I meant to do no harm, to take no more than I had taken from her lips and from the

warm pressure of her body to mine, but meaning this or meaning that aside, I played low in being there at all. I wanted only to hold her in my arms once and kiss her on the lips and then no more. It sickens me to think that he should be taken and me left. She turned from me when Drew died, and would never see me again. When I saw her to-day as you talked to her, hidden as I was by boxes on the dock, I felt that not only he had lost his life, but that she had lost what is deeper than life—it seems silly of me to talk of purity, but she was pure in soul and body.”

“Tarboe,” said I, “it was not either of you in one way, it was the little Creole widow in the Champs Elysées.”

He waved a hand: “Don’t think I’m not ready to take full responsibility. I am. I’m only trying to find a reason for it—the end of it I know, and I shall never see Alice again. She’s in a world where I’ve no part at all.”

Suddenly he clasped his hands and bowed his head, and a look of misery came to his face; “Alice brought out always the best in me. For her I could have given up even playing cards, but I was not fit for her. I had always been a villain, because I was of the world and would always be. I was never wholly bad and never wholly good. Blessing and curse were in all I did, and all I thought, and so to-day when the *Touraine* moved off upon that tossing floor of water, I said to myself: ‘There goes the last glimmer in the gloom.’ For the last forty-eight hours I’ve lived like one shut off from earthly hope. I’ve been down deeper than Hell,

down where Satan and his hordes would not and could not go. I've lost in those black wells all that made life worth while—I did what has robbed this world of the best of men. I said to you once that a woman could love two men. I take it back. It can't be done. She loved me—she did not love him—but she thought she did. Now, she hates me and she loves the memory of him.” He caught hold of the table between us and it shook with his emotion.

Then, as I made no reply, at last he looked out of the window, at the green trees, the grass, the flying birds, the houses and the châteaux, the lovely grounds past which the train sped. Time passed and he grew quiet.

CHAPTER XIX

WE MEET AGAIN

THE years went by. The interests of my life grew wider and more varied. I entered the British Parliament, but I had travelled before that in Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Greece, Turkey, Austria, Italy, Germany, and nearly all the European States, and since then in America, South Africa and elsewhere. I met many distinguished and notorious people, but never one with such interest for me as Frank Tarboe. After eighteen years I resigned Parliament owing to overwork and ill-health. I could not spend the winter in England, so I decided to go to Aiken, South Carolina.

In many years I had never heard of Tarboe, but I came to know that three years after the death of Simeon Drew in Paris, Alice died in Kentucky. The tragedy of those days in Paris was often in my mind, and I remembered her words to me in the Continental Hotel: "I'd like to go after Sim and tell him all." Life had been so tremendously busy that only in odd moments did the memory of those tragic days come to me. One day in London, however, I picked up the *Evening Standard*,

and I saw that Frank Tarboe had been arrested in Montreal for conspiracy to defraud at cards, and that Scotland Yard had sent to the police in Quebec the dossier of the man who had won notoriety in England by the fight with sabres in Old Quebec Street. It seemed almost impossible that the man I had met so long ago should still be pursuing his old pernicious trade in the old pernicious way.

I left London in November and went to Aiken. It is a winter resort for fashionable northern people, and with only four hotels of size or character. The most important of these was Wilcox's, which was beside the railway, and had not many conveniences, was small but immensely popular. I received from Mr. Wilcox, an Englishman, who had been a butler to W. C. Whitney, the famous Minister of the Navy in Cleveland's Cabinet, a cable that rooms would be ready for me. I stayed there until New Year's Eve, and then I went to the Highland Park Hotel, because the rooms I had at Wilcox's were let from that date.

One night I told Tarboe's story to the Hon. Wallace Nesbitt, K.C., of Toronto, once a member of the Supreme Court of Canada, to William Warner Bishop, the President of *McCall's Magazine*, and to a Mr. Gilbert, who is one of the Directors of the Irving Bank in New York. The three men were fascinated by his story and Nesbitt said: "By gad, I'll try to get Tarboe out of prison! A more remarkable story I've never heard, and he must have his chance again. I don't know the Chief Justice of Quebec, but I know the Attorney-General, and I'll write to him. It is the custom in every

country to give prisoners a chance even after condemnation, and why not in Canada ? ” Then Mr. Gilbert told of a man who had been arrested for heavy stealing in New York and had been released from the Tombs on the guarantee of his wife, and is now one of the best citizens of the state. Well, this was just before I left Aiken, and I got the reply of the Attorney-General through Mr. Nesbitt. It said there was no one on their books called Frank Tarboe, but there was a Fred Todero, and he had been imprisoned for only three weeks. I said to myself : “ How did the *Evening Standard* know it was Frank Tarboe ? ” Tarboe had often changed his name and why shouldn’t he have done so again in Montreal ? Besides, F. T. were the initials of his own name !

Warner of *McCall’s* said : “ I must have that story. You shall meet my Editor in New York.” I met the Editor at luncheon, arranged for this story, and I said to him : “ I want to know what has happened to Tarboe since. I’ll advertise for him,” so the following notice appeared in the *New York Times*.

Botany Bay wishes to meet Frank Tarboe, whom he met on the way to Los Angeles, in Honolulu, in New Zealand, in Australia, in London and in Paris.

I did not use my own name, only “ Botany Bay,” because only four people knew what happened at Botany Bay, and two of them were dead. The replies were to be sent from the *New York Times* to *McCall’s Magazine*.

There came many replies, in none of which save

one I believed, and my judgment was correct about that one, as I afterwards found. At last a letter came from Chicago—it was written at the Blackstone Hotel, and it said :

My address is Frank Tarboe, c/o W. J. Brown, Dearborn Express Co., 539, North State Street, Chicago, Ills. Will be pleased to hear from you.

Sincerely,

FRANK TARBOE.

I had forgotten Frank Tarboe's handwriting, and I said: "This looks crooked—Blackstone Hotel and two other addresses." However, I wrote, without sending my name, but signing "Botany Bay," a type-written letter, and said: "If you are Frank Tarboe, tell me what happened at Botany Bay." There came a reply by telegram :

It is me all right. My house Old Quebec Street, Marble Arch, London. Friends Alonzo, Little Bill, Captain Graham, Colyer Carew, Horace Joe Leigh. Sir Joseph Bank's Hotel, Botany Bay, Mrs. Frank Smith, Proprietress. Friends Teddy Knight, J. D. Robinson. Write me same as before.

Then a letter followed, written also from the Blackstone Hotel, Chicago :

Since I wired you last night, I have been thinking. I may be wrong, but it's strange to me that the whole thing fits exactly. I left San Francisco in 1885 for Honolulu, after a stay there I sailed for Sydney, N.S.W. I lived at the Sir Joseph Bank's Hotel, Botany Bay. I spent some time in Australia, New Zealand and Tasmania, where I became well known and much advertised. I have never heard of another name like mine, and if I am not the Frank Tarboe you met, someone must have used my

TARBOE

name. I am six feet tall, very dark, and then weighed about 160 pounds. I played cards and raced horses. From Australia I went to India, Egypt and Europe. I lived in London and Paris for years. I travelled *all over* the world several times, and never heard the name Frank Tarboe. In London I was the principal in the cutless case, about 1895. My friends in London all went to Old John Carr's. Anyway, you have me guessing and I would like to hear the outcome.

Yours truly,
FRANK TARBOE.

In reply I wrote over my own name and said : "You are Frank Tarboe all right, and I want to meet you again."

I asked him to dine with me in New York the day following my expected arrival. There was no response to that letter, but two days after reaching New York, the telephone rang. A voice said : "I am Frank Tarboe." I recognized it—there could be no mistake. I said : "Will you dine with me to-night at the Pyrenees Restaurant ?" The reply was : "All right—with pleasure." Then I asked for his address, but he would not give it.

I spent a busy day, but I was thinking of Tarboe all the time. When I stepped into the lobby of the restaurant in Sixth Avenue there he was, not looking older than when I saw him last, though his hair was white, but he was as slim as of old and as quietly dressed, and he stood with military salute, his eyes shining, when he saw me enter. He did not look a day more than fifty-seven or fifty-eight, and he was quiet in manner and youthful in walk. Like some women, he had the power of attraction. The maître d'hôtel and the waiter for our table,

though they did not know him, were evidently impressed by him, and they gave us good attention.

We began our dinner and he was so excited he could scarcely eat. He saw me glancing round the restaurant: "Looking for someone you know, because of me? Ashamed of me?" he asked.

I answered sharply: "Don't be silly, Tarboe. If I was ashamed, do you think I'd dine you in a public restaurant? I've never been ashamed of you."

He smiled whimsically.

"I know that—knew it when I asked. I suppose I wanted to hear you say that. You don't care a fig for public opinion, if you know you're on the right track. I ain't sure you're on the right track in having to do with me—an ex-gaolbird and gambler, but I like it just the same. You and I ain't the least alike—you a great literary man with the world at your feet, I an outcast at the feet of the world; but I like it—I like it!"

At last he drew a flask from his pocket, in this prohibition city. "Whisky—will you have some?" I nodded. "I want to drink your health, Tarboe," I said. I raised my glass. "Here's to you for ever and for ever!" We both drank it off.

I never drink whisky, but I drank this because I wanted to toast my old rascalion friend, and I suppose it was the first glass of whisky I had drunk in twenty years, but it was the best I ever tasted.

"Bless you, bless you, you're the real thing!" he said.

It was not a time for regular talk, but I said: "Are you doing pretty well?" His reply was:

"Oh yes, I took thirty thousand dollars out of Jaggermall (an assumed name) last month." Presently, in reply to a question, he denied that he had been imprisoned in Montreal. I said: "How old are you?" He said: "Seventy-three." "Well," I said, "your eye is as bright as a boy of thirty." "Yes," he replied, "I've never had a toothache in my life, and every tooth in my head is sound. I could bite a nail in two. I never had a headache or a day's illness, and never expect to—no."

I said: "Why do you never expect to?" He said: "I'll die suddenly—mebbe!" There was a queer look in his eyes when he said it.

"I suppose so," I replied, understandingly.

"Tarboe, why didn't you give me your real name and address?" I asked.

"Well, I'm not living under my own name. I'm in one of the most respectable hotels in New York. I had to change the name, for mine was known in every central police court in the world. I'm living at the Sauterne. If I'd given my own name, they wouldn't have let me in, it's so well known everywhere. The constables know all about it. The Chief of Police said: 'That's all right, Frank, go under any name you like. We'll understand.'"

The talk was very haphazard and without method, but I arranged during dinner that we must meet many times, and we should plan out our talk so that I could get all I needed for my story of his life. So many memories were crowding, so much had happened since we had seen each other last, such scores of questions were coming to my mind, that it was impossible to keep the talk concentrated.

I can see the crowded restaurant and the people all round us, though we sat against the wall ; and why I know not, but faces were turned in our direction, because perhaps we seemed an ill-assorted pair as to outward appearances, but inside perhaps, "Like the captain's lady and Judy O'Grady, sisters under the skin." It was a summer night, and I can see the pink shades of the candles, and the distant whirring of the fans on the walls, and hear the buzz of talk, but all the time we were not in a real world, but in some fantasia of the spirit, some grotesque haven of life, in some impossible, improbable vision.

At last he leaned across the table and said : " Is there anything I can do for you ? I always believed you'd get to a high place, you're a bigger man than I, a million times, but you liked me and I liked you. What can I do for you ? " I said, smiling : " Tarboe, you can give me a bottle of brandy," for I had to take a little every night on the advice of my doctor. He leaned back in his chair. " Holy smoke, is that all ? We have the best always, we card men. The best in the world is yours. Don't you like whisky ? " " No," I said, " I can't drink whisky. I have drunk this because it's yours." He said : " Would your servant like some whisky ? " I said : " He would, I'm sure," so he brought him a bottle, and later, another.

" Tarboe, tell me, how did you feel the day you were condemned ? "

A curious, far-away look of trouble and of resolution came to his eyes. " I expected punishment, so I wasn't surprised. For an instant the court room

grew dim when my sentence came, but the Judge's voice stole from an infinite distance, quiet, terrible and cold in his condemnation. Then my sight came back. I looked at the Judge. I bowed. I looked round the court room ; no faces there friendly to me. I sniffed the half-poisoned air, and, with a warder in front of me and one behind me, walked slowly down the spiral steps to the room beneath, where there was one bench. The warder motioned me to sit down, which I did. There came to my mind a picture of the three years I was to spend shut out from this workaday world, from the pleasant freedom of the open spaces, to be at the beck and call of officers and warders and guarders, to eat and exercise according to rule, and wear the black arrow on the prison clothes. I didn't like it.

"I was condemned in the same building, though not in the same court room, as Oscar Wilde. The door opened above, and I saw him come staggering down the staircase, fat, hunched, haggard, with eyes staring and horror and agony in his look. I did not know him, though I had seen him more than once, and I got to my feet, and when he reached the bench, I stood up and put my arms around him. My heart was moved. It was horrible that he, who had stood so high in the literature of the world, should be in the ditch, where all could throw stones of contempt, and hatred and slander at him. I have no religion that I know of, but I talked to him quietly, like a man of the world, and said he should have courage and see it through. His broken reply was : 'How could they do it ! How can I bear it ! I shall not live—I shall not live !'

“ ‘You’ll live, you’ll fight it through,’ I said. ‘God be good to you,’ and then warders separated us, and he went to his prison and I to mine. The memory of him blotted out my own shame, my own horror.”

I said to him at last : “Tarboe, what was life like in prison ?”

“Well,” he said, “we had only porridge and brown bread for breakfast, and the same for supper. Dinner was in the middle of the day, and it was only soup, sometimes—very seldom—a little meat in the soup. We never got meat but once a week—never. My porridge would stand upright when I tipped it out, and I scooped a bit off the top and put a little water in and ate it. Look at my muscles !” Muscles absolutely like iron ; I never had seen better, not even in Sandow. He said : “I’ve seen people arrive in prison, big like that, and small like that,” he made gestures, “and leave as slim and strong as me. For sure, it ain’t the food I’d recommend, but it’s good for strength and health. Fact is, we all eat too much.”

I said : “Did they work you hard in prison ?”

“Not hard. I got three years because I jumped my bail, and for good conduct (as you know) I got out at the end of two years and four months,” and there was a curious twinkle in the corner of his eye.

“Well, Tarboe, you asked me once to write your life. I’m going to now.”

“Good—good !”

“Don’t be afraid of what I’ll say about you.”

“I’m not feared—no !”

“ I’ve always believed in ‘ The soul of goodness in things evil.’ ”

“ Yes,” he said, “ that’s right. Haddon Chambers said it in his play, ‘ The Idler.’ ”

“ Did you know Haddon Chambers ? ”

“ Intimately—intimately. When he had a first night in London he’d ask me to sit with him, and the same in New York.”

“ You’ve had some very distinguished friends.”

“ Yes, most distinguished friends ! ” And he winked at me amusingly.

“ Tarboe, when you left prison, what happened ? Did you get your own clothes ? ”

“ No, they gave me a ready-made suit. I went straight to my tailor and he met me with open arms, and said : ‘ Come upstairs.’ He said : ‘ We knew when you were coming out, and at our request they sent us all your clothes. We’ve kept them here for you,’ and there were my clothes and my boots with trees in them, and he offered to lend me £10 ! I said : ‘ Not a penny, not a penny.’ Then I went to the Café Royal, and all my gambling friends were there—all of them. They knew when I was out that I’d go to the Café Royal. One man offered me £50, another £10, another £20. I could have had anything I wanted, yes, I could. And why did they do it ? Because I’d killed two of the worst crooks in London. I didn’t know it, but they had both died, within a year, from the wounds I gave them, and they were so grateful—there’s honour among rogues like me—that they were willing to do anything for me.

“ I have no complaint against the Judge or

Scotland Yard. They thought I got what I deserved. But I didn't. Those men came to kill me, and they died through me; but I wasn't arrested—there had passed out of the underworld of London two of the worst ever in it, and they knew it. I oughtn't to have jumped my bail! I realize that now. I feared I'd get a heavy sentence if my past all came out in Court, which it did. I never knowingly did anything wrong in my life—really wrong. All I can say is, while prison has finished my life with the outside world for ever and ever, it didn't spoil me—it made me."

CHAPTER XX

THERE IS THE MAN

AFTER our first dinner I met Tarboe several times. I dined with him one night at a restaurant far down town, where you could have quite a good dinner with wine included. It was a restaurant where gamblers used to meet, with a bar that was never raided. I will not say it equalled Sherry's or Delmonico's or that of the Ritz or the Plaza, but the food was fair, the place was clean, and the people coming and going were very well-dressed. I am bound, however, to say they were a pretty shady lot, though they could have dined—most of them—in any of the best clubs of New York. One night I was telling a member of a very important club about Tarboe. He said: "Why don't you bring him here?" My reply was: "What! Bring a gaolbird and notorious gambler to this highly respectable club?" His reply was: "Why not? I live at the Club—bring him up to my room and we will have something to drink beforehand—I won't dine with you, but I'd like to meet that man."

I thought it over. I said: "All right. I'll

bring him, but you must not let him suspect I've told you anything about his past career." He said : " You can rely upon it."

Well, I took him to the Club. We went to this member's room, and I had one cocktail, Tarboe had two and the member had two and then we talked, and Tarboe fascinated him as he did most people whom he met. He never was careless in his talk, he had an intuitive and perceptive mind—could adapt himself to circumstances, and when we were in the dining-room later, no one present imagined that a notorious criminal was dining with me.

Later we went to my hotel, and there he talked about himself, in reply to questions. I used to walk every day in the late afternoon before dinner, and he sometimes walked with me, and it was difficult to tell that we were not on the same social plane, so quietly was he dressed, and so natural his manner.

One day I said to him : " Tarboe, in the forty years I have known you, have you ever been penniless, or down and out ? "

He laughed : " Yes, I was penniless in gaol, and down and out too, but never so out of gaol. Then I have not been down and out, but up and in."

" You owe the world a lot," I said. " You haven't worked for your living. You've got it by playing things low upon the world at large."

A shade crossed his face. " Playing things low ! Gosh, I don't play things low ! Those who play with me stand to win and I to lose."

I laughed. " On the whole, though, you have won, and you are not a poor man."

A steely glitter came into his eye. "No, I'm not a poor man, but with what I've got by playing cards, I've given freely to many a poor devil out on his uppers, to many a good cause. I've given back to the world, apart from my living, which has never been costly, much that I've won. I am a devil, I know. I've been in gaol—I've been arrested, I've seen the depths of disgrace, but I've kept my eye sometimes on the stars. I'm black, but not all black; I'm bad, but not all bad; I've been in hell and I've been in heaven; I've been in waterspouts and hurricanes and storms and earthquakes, and I've been in the soft light of dawn and the glow of evening, and bells of peace have rung for me. You can't take from me what I've had. I've picked wild flowers from the salt bush plains of Australia. I've heard the bell-bird sing. I've been in the stranger's hut in the back blocks. I've carried my swag like a sundowner, and I've jumped my bail like a thief.

"I've seen the wild veldt of South Africa, and have lived underground there, and I've had my face in its dust, and the scar on my forehead and that on my hand are some return for the happiness of life in Jo'burg and Molly Melsham, and the everlasting sun that one sees in South Africa—its loneliness, its beautiful loneliness, its kopjes, its spruits, its wild horses, and its dreary wastes made sweet by the human life on them."

He suddenly swung upon me and caught me by the arms. "Boy, oh boy," said he, "you strike at the heart of things, and you've struck the heart of me.

“By the great horn spoons, I’m no good, but there are worse than me in the world. I’ve killed, I’ve been drunk, I’ve gone large, but there never was a man with a sounder body than mine, and few with healthier spirit. Whether it’s the Injun in me, belonging to this continent, or the Frenchman in me, belonging to Europe, I don’t know, but I do know this: ancestors I never knew, European, and the spirit of Indian chiefs through ages gone works in my veins, and between the two—here I am at seventy-three, with a body like iron and my step quick and my spirit young. Tell me, what does it all mean?”

I looked at his fiery eyes and his flushed face, and I recalled the night when he had told me in my hotel of the fight in Old Quebec Street. Then he lived the whole scene over again. He described it to me as though it were happening, showed me how he fought them—the men who had come to kill him. Then, the perspiration had broken out on his face, his eyes became black with feeling, his colour was like that of an Indian ancestor dancing the dance of death. It was all so real, so terrific in its drama, that I looked at him now and said:

“Tarboe, ancient races work in you. You are not yourself only. You are what has come to you through Europe and America. God only knows who your father was, but he was a gentleman, for you’ve shown the gentleman’s heart in many things, and as for your Indian chiefs, don’t you realize there is more nobility in that ancient race, now in such a minority on the continent, than there is in those who in the late war performed in Christian

Europe horrors that never the worst Indian in the world performed upon a captive. Torture—yes, in the old days, when torture was the habit of nations, but torture in 1914 to 1918, in this modern world, as they say in the language of the streets, it ‘beats the band.’”

Tarboe’s face cleared. He was as adroit as Machiavelli, but as simple as a child—adroit in all the subterfuges and skill and deeds in his profession, but like a child in all other things. He was inherently great, not in his career, but in his native and delicate simplicity. How many times we walked and talked, and yet the names of our old friends in Australia had not once been mentioned. I wanted to speak to him about Alice Drew, but I could not bring myself to do it, and I could see by the far-away *triste* look in his eyes that he avoided it, too. Yet we must come to it all before the end of our talks, and as I walked with him, talked with him, and dined with him, I recalled that day when we saw the *Touraine* take Alice to America, and we travelled to Paris together.

At last we dined together at my hotel, and after we had eaten and by some accident fell silent, both thinking of the past, his eyes upon the ceiling, puffing his cigar, he said to me at last quietly and reminiscently :

“I want to tell you more of my life from the start. You know of my going to Cheyenne City. Well, after I left Cheyenne City I went to what is now a great centre, but what was then Harry Enderkin’s Ranch, near Julesberg, on the Colorado River. It had a great saloon, and there one could

get drink, always at a high price for those days, and most of the bold men of the West, as they were called, used to gather there. Buffalo Bill—William Cody, with his handsome form and his long curls to his shoulders—used to frequent the place. He was called Buffalo Bill from shooting buffaloes for the American Army, and the soldiers used to gather them in.

“I was called Arizona Frank—I don’t know why, because though I had been in Arizona, had fought duels, and played cards there, I was only called that because it sounded good, not because it was true. Well, I was near as tall as Buffalo Bill, but I never had his fame, except in the police courts, where I paid a big price for all my misdeeds, if misdeeds you call them. There are more crimes done in the Stock Exchange, and booming of lands in Florida than I’ve ever done. That cheating is on a prodigious scale. I don’t cheat—I only see the cards with a trained eye. I can learn any game of cards in an hour. It makes no difference what game I play.

“Well, I used to go to Harry Enderkin’s Ranch, and I saw a lot of Buffalo Bill and Dashing Charlie. Dashing Charlie!—there was a man for you—through and through. He was afraid of nothing—could fight anything, and he did. He was like Bill Hickok, who was one of the most famous, and justly famous, fighters of the West. He snuffed out the lives of at least forty.

“Dashing Charlie was all right too, and I don’t know how many men he killed, but it don’t matter. The West recalls him pleasant.

"Now, when we were all going to Enderkin's Ranch, which still exists, though it ain't so famous as in those far-off days, there came to see the wild life of which he had written much one known as Ned Buntline. His real name was Colonel Edward Zane Carroll Judson, and he was one of the most picturesque characters of his time. He was born near Stamford, New York—was alternately a sailor at eleven years of age, a midshipman in the United States Navy at fifteen, and a lieutenant in the Seminole War, trapper, explorer, writer, fighter, and was lynched by a mob in the streets of Nashville, Tennessee, but was cut down, fortunately before he was dead.

"The lynching came from his having killed a man in a duel. Judson, known as Ned Buntline, was one of the founders of the 'Know Nothing' party, and the ringleader of the Astor Place Theatre Riots, and was sentenced by Judge Daly to a year's imprisonment in the penitentiary. Oh, we were a wild and criminal lot, but there was good stuff in us! Ned Buntline, to see the life as it really was, came out to Enderkin's Ranch, and there, with Buffalo Bill, wild Bill Hickok, Texas Jack Omohundro and Captain Crawford fought Indians, hunted buffalo and gathered material for the 'Tales of the Border,' which thrilled hundreds of thousands of readers in later years.

"Ned Buntline made Buffalo Bill famous, and he wrote inimitable stories for the *New York Weekly*, which I think does not now exist. He was a drunkard, was Ned Buntline, but he was also a temperance lecturer, and John B. Gough, the

temperance talker, was the same. Greatly moved by the life at Enderkin's Ranch, Buntline went to Nixon's Amphitheatre in Chicago, taking with him Dashing Charlie, Buffalo Bill and Arizona Frank—that's me! Nixon let him have the theatre for a temperance lecture on a Sunday night, and he delivered his speech to great applause, and he had a fine throat for strong drink! I've seen him polish off two bottles of whisky in an evening, and he polished off half a bottle before he delivered his temperance lecture at Nixon's Amphitheatre in Chicago. Without Nixon's permission, at the close of the lecture, having Buffalo Bill, Dashing Charlie and myself in the wings, he calls on the stage us three tall, and if I do say it, good-looking men, and says he: 'I'm going to give a Wild West show in this amphitheatre to-morrow week.'

"When he came off the platform, Nixon said to him: 'What the hell do you mean by shouting a performance in my amphitheatre to-morrow week?' 'Oh,' said Buntline, 'that's all right. I'm going to fill the amphitheatre for you, and you'll make a lot of cash.' Nixon laughed. 'By gosh,' he said, 'I like your cheek, but all right, you go ahead.' Ned Buntline wrote the play himself in two nights, and rotten bad it was, but it had Wild West life in it, and he pulled it off immense. We couldn't get Indians from the reservations in the United States in time, so we got them from Canada, and we had a 'devil of a time.' The amphitheatre was full night after night. Ned Buntline was a genius. We left Chicago and went to Niblo's in New York, and we played in New York and the East for months to

great success, but we broke up at Louisberg, Missouri, and the last I saw of Ned Buntline, he was blind drunk, walking the streets with Dan Rice, the circus manager, having what might be called 'a way up time.'

"After we broke up at Louisberg, I went to Washington and saw General Custer. I was so mad for adventure that I enlisted in his army—and I became sergeant at once. I didn't know then what a rash fighter Custer was. That's what I meant going to Los Angeles, when I said he was a great man gone wrong—he'd a right to risk his own life, but not those of his soldiers. The Cheyennes, Blackfeet, Sioux, Hunkapapas and the rest under Gall, Crazy Horse, Crow King, Black Moon, all great Generals, did for him. Well, no more of Custer. He was a great Indian fighter, but he went, and all his men, except me! They did not mutilate him, and he sleeps at West Point. For fifteen years he had been triumphant, but something triumphed over him. He bit the dust.

"Now about Australia. I knew Sir Daniel Wilson, a rich man, and the owner of racehorses; and his trainer, Alf Drake, said to me one day, 'Frank, I want to borrow £800 from you.' I said to him: 'Drake, you can have £800 if you'll let me train Pasha for the Yam Yam Stakes.'

"He looked surprised, and said: 'Pasha is a valuable horse.' I said: 'I know that.' He said: 'What do you know about horses, Frank?' 'Well,' I said, 'I know more than you'll ever know. I was brought up on horses, and I'll train Pasha so he'll win the Yam Yam Stakes.' He said, 'How will you

do it ?' I said, 'Never mind, but I'll do it. What I want to know is, will you let me ?' He looked me up and down. 'Well,' he said, 'you're taking a lot on your shoulders, and this is not my horse. It's Sir Daniel Wilson's, and if it don't come well out of your hands, he'll get shirty.' 'Well,' said I, 'let him get shirty, if you'll let me train Pasha.' He said : 'Give me the £800 down.'

"Now Pasha was a mile horse, a bay with white legs, and very handsome. They'd been training him as a two-miler, and he couldn't stand it. I knew better, so I trained him as a one-miler, and a fine horse he was. As I saw him improve, I decided he'd make a bold bid for the Cup. But Pasha had a brother, Spade Guinea, a bad horse as Pasha was good. Except for the eye they looked alike, as much as twins. I was afraid Spade Guinea would win the race, for he was a devil to go.

"The race began. I was standing where I could see them come in, and so help me, Pasha lost by half a nose. He had been started at twenty to one, but before the race began rumours brought up the price to within fighting distance of even money. Pasha lost, but I looked up at the Judge's roster, and, so help me, according to it, Pasha had won. I toddled down the course and met my jockey coming in second. 'To the front,' I said, 'Pasha has won !' He shook his head : 'No, he hasn't.' 'To the front !' I said, and with a queer look on his face, for he knew the truth, he went front, and that is how Pasha won the Yam Yam Stakes ! The judges were mistaken—that's all—they didn't do it purposely.

“ I made money at racing and cards in Australia, but cards is surer than racing. I'd a racing stable in Melbourne, and I took a string of horses to India—whalers, they were, and I came out second for the Viceroy's Cup. I sold all my horses in India. Then I went to China, and I raced with galloways. They are not over fourteen hands high, and I had more or less success, but there's no sure money in racing, and by my expenses in India and China I lost all I'd made in Australia.

“ I travelled through Russia, where I used to play cards at noblemen's houses, and in Italy, Spain and France I learned their languages, but I did not learn German—it was too hard. I travelled in Portugal along the Mediterranean, Tangiers, Morocco and the Balearic Islands, and at last I settled down in London, and *most* of the rest you know ! ”

We had had many talks and some walks together, and this was to be our last meeting, for I was leaving presently for England. We had never spoken of Alice, nor of the events in Paris, in all our talks, for I had carefully avoided it, and I was certain he did not wish it ; but our last meeting had come, and I must speak. We sat silent for some time, and I am sure it was in his mind that I was going to say what I did, for a curious troubled look came to his eyes and he smoked faster than usual, and his cigar puffs were like jets from a geyser. I can recall the room where we sat, high up, quiet, though now and then came the snorting of a motor in the street below, and it was moonlight, and the blinds were up, and

there were no lights in the room. Yet there was a moon, and there was light enough from outside to see the working of his face. It was summer time and we had talked long after dinner.

At last I said to him : " Well, Tarboe, we've come to our last talk together for many a day—how long, who can tell ? One page of your experiences we have not read—let us read it now."

He sat up in his chair stiffening, and he looked at me with troubled eyes. " I guess what you're going to say," he said.

" You guess right, Tarboe. *She* died, and you knew ! "

For a moment he did not speak, for there passed before his spirit's eye the one great honest, truthful romance of his life. He had never loved but one woman, and that love had become a tragedy. His face clouded heavily. " Yes, she died in Kentucky—the only woman I ever truly loved." He shuddered. " That horrible thing in Paris clouded my life. I never saw her again. When I left the Continental Hotel the sun almost stopped shining for me. You remember our meeting at Havre, and our journey back to Paris ? I didn't see how I could go on at all, I was so battered. For years gloom and shame and the terrible memory were with me. If Drew wanted revenge, he had it in my misery, and in the thought that Alice and I would never again in life or time speak to each other, or look into each other's eyes. She hated me now, I know, and yet I loved her as I never had before. I've been through many bad days and dark deeds, but that was the worst of all. The trouble

was I couldn't hear from her, and dared not go where she lived. So at last one day in the *New York Times*, I read the notice of her death. For a long time I had to school myself to face the world, and do the daily round."

He sat for a moment staring in front of him, and I did not speak. There was nothing to say. His eyes closed, then opened slowly.

"She is happy now, I know. She was a flower, and, oh boy, she is in the garden that has no end. I remember her, and I live on." He bowed his head.

I did not speak, but reached out and grasped his hand.

MY tale is almost ended. Frank Tarboe might have risen to any heights. In one way he is below the pavement on which we walk, yet not below steadfastness in friendship, courage in time of peril, endurance of misery and imprisonment, and with an honour of his own, he rises higher than many of us. He said to me he could bite a nail in two ; so his inner man can bite a nail in two, and beneath the wrong things he has done, and they have been many, there has been an unconquerable soundness of heart and soul. I would sooner have gone to Frank Tarboe in trouble than to any relative of mine, or any friend I ever had. I'm not ashamed to have known him, to have liked him much, and here I have put up on record some of his sins, and his folly ; but if we would count sins and folly, how many would stand the test ? Perhaps we would not manipulate the cards, but we do not hesitate, in different ways maybe, to manipulate the social life and circumstances in which we move. How many of us can say that we have ever held unchangeably to the truth, that we have never robbed—not money perhaps, but persons or institutions or great national organizations of something ? To any critic of my story I say : “ If you would see one who has descended low, but has ascended high : There is the man.”

NOTE

*W*ISHING to have the record of Frank Tarboe complete, I wrote to Sir William Horwood, the head of Scotland Yard, in November last, asking for permission to read Frank Tarboe's dossier as it existed in Scotland Yard. Sir William Horwood's reply was that it could not be done, and he used these words at the close of his letter: "Our criminal records are for service use only, and are treated as strictly confidential."

I wrote and thanked him and asked him for the date of the trial, and in the British Museum I read the account of the trial at the Central Criminal Court.

Early in February of this year I wrote to the Right Hon. Sir William Joynson-Hicks, the Home Secretary, in whose department Scotland Yard is included. I had known Sir William Joynson-Hicks many years. I told him of Sir William Horwood's statement. His reply was: "I read your letter with great interest, and only wish I could grant your request, but I really must not. . . . If I could give any novelist this privilege, you may be sure I should be glad to give it to you."

So that was my only connection with the official history of Frank Tarboe.



